

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

**Guide: *Your Kingdom Come* - by Daniel Deutschlander
Questions and Answers - by Kurt Grunewald**

Also see the notes in the EHV Study Bible

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Preface

Mark 14:51 - This may be the only reference to Mark in the gospels.

Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, goes with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. They go first to Cyprus and then to Perga in Pamphylia. There Mark leaves them and returns to Jerusalem. We are not told why but Paul sees this as an act of desertion. When the time comes for a second missionary journey Barnabas wants to take Mark along with them again but Paul objects and an argument breaks out between them. Finally Paul takes Silas and sets out for Asia Minor while Barnabas takes Mark and revisits the congregations in Cyprus.

Acts 12:25; Acts 13:13; Acts 15:36-41

Paul and Mark later reconcile and Paul considers Mark a help to him in his ministry.

Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:9-11

Mark was especially close to Peter who calls Mark his son. We think that Mark's gospel is really his record of all that Peter told him. Most likely Mark wrote his gospel after Peter and Paul had written their epistles.

1 Peter 5:13

The early church fathers tell us that Mark eventually went to Egypt. There, according to some early reports, he became the leader, perhaps the founder of the church in Alexandria. Mark is always associated with a lion. Tradition says that when the Romans wanted to execute him by feeding him to the lions, the lions refused to eat him. Instead, they sat down at his feet and he petted them.

Read the first full paragraph from *Your Kingdom Come*, page x.

Mark 1

Read Mark 1:1-3

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

- "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," Mark writes. Why is this a grand title? It is the good news about Jesus (Savior) Christ (the Anointed one). He is the eternal Son of God now clothed in a human nature.

- Look at the first word of Isaiah's prophesy. That simple word Look! is often used in the Bible to announce something shocking, surprising, unexpected. The messenger is just a voice, in the wilderness, not a herald riding a great white horse with a thousand trumpeters blasting away. The greater, the more glorious the work and the message, the more lowly will be its outward appearance!

- How do we prepare for the way of the Lord? We can't but God himself does it by sending out his messenger John with his call to repentance.

Read Mark 1:4-8

- Compare John's literal wilderness with the human heart. Both are arid, dry, incapable of any self-generation. The human heart is dead in sin, missing the mark set by God in the law. Remember that God's minimum standard set by the law is perfection. Twisted and perverted, rough indeed, is the path through this wilderness. And no one wants to hear this truth.

- How does the Savior's forerunner and herald ever break through to the human heart? John preaches. He is the herald announcing the coming of another. He starts with the law, which shatters and devastates and drives us to despair. Then comes his real goal. He announces the coming of the Savior, not to destroy but to save. The water of baptism washes away sin and this is sure and certain because of the coming of Jesus. Through Word and sacrament the Holy Spirit works true repentance - sorrow over sin and faith in Jesus who came to save us.

Read Mark 1:9-11

John Baptizes Jesus

- How is Jesus' baptism different from ours? Jesus was without sin, including original sin. Why then should Jesus be baptized? This was the manner in which he and the Father and the Holy Spirit chose for the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Jesus joins himself to us, and by water and the word we are joined to him.

- Mark the activity of the Holy Trinity in Jesus' baptism. The heavens are torn open as the Spirit descends in the form of a dove. Note the Father's presence and voice without the cloud. That's remarkable. Normally when God appeared in the Old Testament he used a cloud to hide his glory. The gospel's promise is that we too one day will see God face to face. The Holy Spirit takes the form of a gentle creature and rests on Jesus' head. He is eager for Jesus to begin his work and is ready to bless and prosper it.

- Listen to what the Father says to his divine, incarnate Son. The Father sends the Son whom he loves on his gruesome mission of heading to the cross where Jesus will willingly walk this path to rejection, to suffering, to hell's torment, and to death. How well pleased the Father will always be with Jesus.

Read Mark 1:12-13

Satan Tempts Jesus

- Look at how Jesus' work begins. The Spirit sends Jesus into the wilderness. (The verb in Greek is a strong one - literally casts or drives him out.) There Jesus does battle with our arch enemy for forty days and forty nights without food or companionship. Moses was forty days and forty nights without food or water on the mountain (Exodus 34:28); Elijah was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness too (1 Kings 19:8). As God preserved these prophets, so Jesus' human nature is preserved.

- Jesus versus Satan. Matthew and Luke give us a more complete account of this cosmic battle. Hebrews 4:15, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.

Note: Jesus performed many miracles, but not one of them made his own life easier. They were all performed for the benefit of others. Satan attacks with lies. Jesus triumphs with the Word. Jesus sets for us a perfect example to follow. But we need more than his example. We need his perfect work for our salvation.

Read Mark 1:14-21

Come Follow Me

- What does “After John was put in prison” tell us about Mark’s gospel? Mark’s gospel will concentrate on the last half of Jesus’ earthly ministry. About a year and a half separates verses 13 and 14.
- What is the gospel of the kingdom of God? There were really only two seasons in Jesus’ kingdom. The first is that of preparing for the coming of the King and the second is his glorious arrival with the kingdom, a season that will end with the return of Christ on the last day. The first season is now finished. Christ has come with his kingdom. Don’t miss it!
- To what does the kingdom of God refer? It is the rule of Jesus in our hearts and lives. Jesus’ kingdom is not a visible and powerful kingdom, as revealed by the arrest and humiliation of John the Baptist. Jesus’ kingdom is invisible. It enters within a person when by the power of the Holy Spirit he/she repents and believes the gospel.
- What does it mean to repent and to believe the gospel? It comes with the preaching of repentance (law) and the proclamation of forgiveness from its King himself (gospel). This message of good news causes us to run to the King with repentance and to trust in him.
- Why did the disciples immediately answer Jesus’ call to follow him? Jesus earlier call (John 1) was a part time call. With this call they will be with Jesus almost continually. Humanly speaking, their willingness to follow Jesus defies human reason. John the Baptist whom they had previously followed was now in prison and Jesus did nothing about that. And they all were flawed individuals. Yet, such is the power of faith and the power of the Word. So often God used those who were weak and flawed to carry on the work of the gospel. They were weak but Jesus, their King, was strong. Ultimately it was Jesus and his Word and his work that were important.
- Why did Jesus say that the disciples would become fishers of men? They truly had been fishermen. The fish in the Sea of Galilee were prized even in Rome but they really weren’t worth much. In fact, until they were caught they really didn’t matter. So also the lives of the people of this world are without point or purpose until they are made alive by God’s Spirit and caught by the preachers of God’s Word. The law of God must kill them before the glorious gospel of the King brings them to life. What a difference that makes! What a difference Jesus would make through the fishing of these four disciples! And Jesus now continues this work of fishing through us.

Read Mark 1:21-28

Jesus Drives Out a Demon

- Hear the first two paragraphs of *Your Kingdom Come* - page 21-22.
- What is a man with an unclean spirit? The man was bodily and mentally possessed by a demon. This was not a form of insanity or epilepsy. The words the demon possessed man spoke and his actions were always gruesome and destructive to himself and to others.
- Analyze the demon possessed man’s cry. It was a shriek and a loud cry. The temptations of the devil and his allies are often noisy, crowding out any pious thought. The demon knows

that Jesus is his destroyer. The doom of this demon and all the other demons was already sealed with their expulsion from heaven. Like a moth drawn to a flame, this demon cannot help himself as he approaches his destroyer. But the knowledge the demon has of Jesus is not faith. It is head knowledge - yes. Trust that Jesus has come to save him - no. How amazing it is that so many yet today follow the devil and his allies in their rejection of the Savior and his Word.

- What happened when Jesus rebuked the evil spirit? He makes a final and futile display of his true nature but in the end must obey Jesus. The demon is defeated and faith survives whatever shrieks and pains the demon may inflict. This is what the kingdom of God is all about, the planting of Jesus' rule in our hearts and lives by faith in the gospel message.

Read Mark 1:29-34

Jesus Heals Many

- What does Jesus immediately do when Simon tells him that his mother-in-law is sick? He immediately goes to her, takes her by the hand and gently raises her up. And the fever left her. Her strength and her energy are restored and she immediately begins to serve. And what is our response as Jesus helps and provides for all our physical and spiritual needs? Serving is always an honor, no matter what form it takes.

- How does this day in Jesus' life end? Scores, maybe hundreds, of people bring to Jesus their sick relatives. Note that they wait for the sun to set so that they didn't break a Sabbath rule. Jesus doesn't tell them that he is tired and that they should come back tomorrow. The people's need was great and they found help in the only one who could help them. Note that Jesus has time for everyone who comes to him. No one is too poor, too great a sinner, too undeserving, too sick, too pushy, too demanding. Jesus helps them all.

Read Mark 1:35-39

Jesus Preaches in Galilee

- Why didn't Jesus sleep in? He sought a solitary place where he could pray and have some quiet fellowship with his heavenly Father. Time for Jesus was short and there was much to do. If Jesus needed this time to prepare him for his life of service for us, what about us?

- Why didn't Jesus stay in Capernaum to enjoy his new popularity? Jesus' goal wasn't to be popular but to be faithful to the mission on which his Father had sent him.

Read Mark 1:40-45

Jesus Heals a Leper

- What new aspect of Jesus' power and grace becomes evident in this miracle? Jesus is dealing with people whose condition is by all human standards hopeless. In this case the hopelessness of this man is especially clear. Lepers were cast out of society and could have no contact with the healthy. They dressed in rags and cried out, "Unclean, unclean" when someone approached. By nature we all are spiritually unclean. Without Jesus this would also for us be eternally true. Jesus doesn't withdraw in horror or disgust when this leper approaches. He is filled with compassion. Basically this Greek word translated "moved with compassion" means that Jesus' stomach churned inside of him. Jesus speaks no word of reproach to the leper but at once reaches out his hand, touches him, and announced his willingness to heal him. It was this same compassion which moved Jesus to come into the world to heal us.

- What does this incident tell you about the leper? This leper had heard about Jesus' power and about Jesus' compassion. His is a perfect prayer in which he casts himself unconditionally on the will of Jesus. He doesn't doubt Jesus' ability to heal him. In an instant the leprosy left him. In an instant the rotted limbs and facial features were restored. In an instant the damage to his internal organs was all undone. The leper's body was now restored and healthy and the leper knew it.

- Why did Jesus give him a stern warning? Jesus wanted a clear testimony to be given to the priests that Jesus was the Messiah, for never had this happened before. But the cleansed leper doesn't obey Jesus. Rather he makes himself a preacher about his miracle with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town. The very severity with which Jesus commanded the man to be silent lets us know that Jesus understood the risk he was taking in cleansing the leper, but Jesus' compassion trumps even his knowledge of the risk. Jesus also wants us to enjoy his blessings but even more he wants us to listen, to hear, believe, and obey his word.

Mark 2

Read Mark 2:1-12 Jesus Forgives Sins

- Describe the current situation. Jesus had been away from Capernaum and very active preaching and teaching in the wilderness regions of Galilee. He returns home to Capernaum. It was only a few days before people knew of his return. What a blessing and delight it must have been for Jesus that so many people wanted to hear his teaching. This small house is filled to overflowing and crowds have gathered outside to hear him. In a Jewish school the teacher would teach those directly in front of him. These people would immediately turn around and repeat it for those behind them. And so it would go. This is how Jesus was able to teach thousands at a time when they were outdoors.

- Describe the unique interruption that happened. A paralyzed man is brought to Jesus by his friends on a pallet. What better friends could a person have. Unable to get through the crowd, they climb up to the roof and take off enough tiles for their friend to be lowered to Jesus by ropes. Jesus had come to build his kingdom with the gospel of forgiveness and he shares with this man his grace and mercy. The verb used for forgive has the literal meaning of "to send away." It was not given grudgingly, half-heartedly, or conditionally.

- Describe the response of the Jewish experts in the law. Their response was sad and tragic. These experts missed the joy.

- Wasn't it true that only God can forgive sins? Jesus by his miracles had already demonstrated that this is exactly who he is - God clothed in our flesh and blood. Jesus can forgive sin, and this is a lot more difficult than anything else Jesus had done. Sin cannot be disposed of just by a word. Sin is a revolution against God and cannot be paid off in an entire lifetime. Jesus would bear the penalty. It was why he had come. He can do it because he is God. He can do it because he has come to suffer the penalty and pay the price himself for the sinner.

- How did Jesus respond to their charge of blasphemy? Not with a sharp rebuke. Not with an angry denunciation. That's how we might have responded, but not Jesus. Even these people he seeks to rescue. Jesus gives them proof of his invisible authority. He proves that he has the

authority and power to do anything that only God can do. Ultimately Jesus will deliver us from every evil of body and soul.

- Note that Jesus calls himself the Son of Man. This is the title used for the Messiah only once in the Old Testament (Daniel 7:13,14). It was not a commonly used title for the Messiah used in Jewish literature. Jesus is truly unique. He is fully human, the one promised already to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). He does what only God can do in a true human nature. Jesus often used this title to describe himself.

- How does the world view sin and our need for forgiveness? The temptation is for people to view sin as cheap and trivial, just a flaw not worth talking about. Big mistake! Heaven and hell weigh in the balance. Let us treasure Jesus' forgiveness as worth more than silver and gold.

Read Mark 2:13-17

The Calling of Levi

- What do you know about tax collectors, like Levi (also called Matthew)? They collected the particular tax or toll on goods that passed on the busy trade routes. Levi was a man of wealth and power. He was rich enough to purchase his job from the Romans at no small expense. The wealth used to buy the position was returned many times over. These people were also much despised, considered as people devoid of conscience or ethics of any kind. They were classed together with prostitutes as irredeemable outcasts from society. They did not participate in the religious life of Israel and generally associated only with their own kind. To spit on their shadow and to go to the other side of the street was considered normal and proper.

- Was Jesus' call to repentance and faith in the kingdom of God just for decent people? Can you see Levi struggling with this question? What if Jesus rejected him? What if all his friends laughed at him? What if he gave up his position and could not get it back again? So Levi heard Jesus and did nothing.

- Discuss Levi's despairing heart and Jesus' omniscience. Jesus always dealt with individuals according to their specific needs. Jesus doesn't stop and point out all his sins. Jesus just speaks to him two words, "Follow me." This tells Matthew everything he needs to know at that moment. Matthew hesitates not for an instant.

- How does Levi's response encourage us to follow Jesus? We might not be better than Levi but we also could not be worse. Look what Jesus did for Matthew. He gave him not only the status of a child of God but also the great honor of being one of Jesus' disciples, an author of one of the four gospels, by God's grace an ambassador for Christ his entire life. Jesus can surely also make of us a blessing useful to others and to the church.

- What is the significance of Levi's inviting Jesus to his banquet? Inviting someone to a meal in Jesus' day was never just a casual courtesy. It always marked the closest connection of friendship or family. So Matthew invited those closest to him. He believed even these sinners could receive forgiveness and the kingdom of God.

- How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees criticism? Note that the critics didn't confront Jesus directly. They much preferred to take on Jesus' disciples. The meaning of Jesus' answer is beautiful and clear. The sinners certainly were sin-sick and in desperate need of a physician for their souls. Jesus had just the medicine that they needed. And the point was that Jesus wanted to cure them too. Note Jesus' compassion also for the Pharisees. He could have lashed out at their cruelty and utter wickedness and self-righteousness but with a simple proverb he rebukes and invites them at the same time.

- Despair and self-righteousness are the two temptations that generally are at the bottom of all others. Which ones plague us today? O Great Physician of the soul, with the bitter tasting medicine of the law, make me see and feel my need; with the balm of the gospel, raise me up and heal me for time and for eternity!

Read Mark 2:18-22

A Question About Fasting

- What do we know about fasting? To the Pharisees fasting was an important part of their religious life. In the law there was one fast day required on the Day of Atonement. That was a special day of repentance with special sacrifices for forgiveness that prefigured Christ's sacrifice. Zechariah (8:19) makes reference to four fast days in the Jewish calendar after their return from exile. There were other fast days (a total of 6 or 7) recognized by almost all Jews. Fasting in and of itself was not bad or uncommon as a sign of devotion and repentance. In Jesus' day there were Pharisees who added fast upon fast. Some would fast twice a week. They became proud of these displays of suffering. They filled them with self-righteousness. They thought themselves even better before God than others. Jesus was turning the focus from sorrow over sin to joy over redemption and forgiveness. The bridegroom to whom John the Baptist had pointed had now arrived.

- Explain Jesus' *mashal* (a combination proverb and riddle) about cloth and wine. New cloth will shrink in time and pull away from the old cloth, making the tear worse. New wine (still fermenting) poured into old dry wineskins (made from the stomachs of sheep or goats) will burst the wineskins. There was a great difference between the religion of the Old Testament as promoted by the Pharisees and Jesus' gospel message of redemption and forgiveness. Jesus wasn't just there to patch up a few things in the popular religion of the day. The old to which our fallen nature clings must be abandoned in favor of our new and necessary repentance. And now? Jesus' words will never pass away. His word endures forever.

Read Mark 2:23-28

Lord of the Sabbath

- What was God's purpose in creating the Old Testament Sabbath? On Saturday God's people were told to refrain from work. In rest they could recall that God rested after the six days of creation. They could recall God's great power and glory and generosity. Additionally they recall how God gave them rest from their slavery in Egypt.

- How had the Pharisees turned the Sabbath Day into a burden? They piled on many regulations concerning what was considered work. They proclaimed that Jesus' disciples were harvesting when they took a few handfuls of grain. (The taking of the grain by passing travelers was permitted by God. No farmer should begrudge a hungry traveler a handful of grain.)

- How did the Pharisees react to Jesus' disciples and why were they delighted to see this great crime? We've got you now, Jesus. You've committed a crime! You've broken the law.

- How did Jesus answer their charge? He points the Pharisees back to the original purpose for the Sabbath law. This rest from labor was always intended by God to be a blessing to his people. To make his point Jesus points back to David's flight from Saul when he gave his hungry men the bread consecrated and set aside for the priests. The ceremonial laws of God were not intended to place absolute burdens on his people. God's grace and goodness triumphs over ceremony.

- What does Jesus mean when he says, “The Son of Man is the Lord even of the Sabbath”? In calling himself the Son of Man Jesus is calling himself the promised Messiah. He is therefore the Lord of the Sabbath and not its servant. The ultimate purpose of the Sabbath was to point to Jesus as One who could save them and give them true rest, Note also that the Sabbath law was a ceremonial law, not the moral law.

- Why don't we observe the Sabbath law today? The third commandment sounds like a ceremonial command. Jesus himself fulfilled the whole of this ceremonial law. Once his saving and rest-giving work was completed, the need of this ceremonial law ended (Colossians 2:16,17). Jesus was not erasing a moral law which expresses God's unchanging will for us. Jesus takes the moral law and our submission to it very seriously. The real goal of the Sabbath continues, to give us an opportunity to hear God's Word, especially to hear of God's saving grace to us in Christ (Luther grasps this truth in his explanation to the third commandment. We should not despise preaching and his Word but hold that Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it.)

Mark 3

Read Mark 3:1-6

Jesus Heals a Man with a Withered Hand

- Why were the Jewish leaders watching Jesus closely? They were just looking for a reason to accuse and attack Jesus. Deliberately they bring this man before Jesus. How tragic! The Son of Man, the true bridegroom of the church, is the target of the leaders of his church. The Pharisees wanted to be the true lords of the church.

- How are we like this man with the withered hand? No mere mortal, not even for a moment, perfectly loves God, submitting to his law, and perfectly loves all humanity. Only Jesus could satisfy our total and desperate need for a Savior.

- Does Jesus ever get really angry? Yes, Jesus was deeply grieved and angry at the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts. The Pharisees have no monopoly on totally wicked hearts and motives. If a person despises Jesus' Word and his forgiving grace, only Jesus' wrath remains. Jesus' anger doesn't show itself that day but one day there will be no escaping the dreadful consequences of persistent sin and unbelief.

- What should have been the only reasonable response of all who saw Jesus heal the man's withered hand without even a word or a touch? Jesus is the true promised Messiah. Who else could do such a thing? And woe to anyone who denies it! Yet look at the Pharisees immediate response.

- What do we know about the Herodians? They were the party-hearty toadies of the cruel and hated family of Herod. Herod ordered the murder of the innocent babies around Bethlehem. He had ordered the slaughter of most of his relatives. He had been put in power by the Romans and his family still held sway in parts of Israel. One of his sons put to death John the Baptist. The Herodians were a loathsome lot who had no use for the religion of the Pharisees. But now they come together with a common goal. The old proverb was proving true: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. How often in history it has proven to be true: enemies of the gospel, unbelievers, join with heretics and the ungodly world to persecute Jesus' people and to attack Jesus' Word.

Read Mark 3:7-12

Jesus Heals Many

- Why did many people from all over Palestine, from both sides of the Jordan River and even from the gentile territories come to Jesus? They came by the hundreds, at times by the thousands, because of their very real needs and because they heard what Jesus was doing. Need, suffering, pain, loss, helplessness are always taps on the shoulder from God by which he would lead them to seek help from him. Wealth melts away. Health turns to sickness and ultimately leads to death. Enjoy God's blessings with thanksgiving but God doesn't promise them as permanent gifts. So don't worship the gifts. Worship God and rely on his help in every time of need.

- Why did Jesus ask his fishermen disciples to have a small boat ready for him? Jesus needed the boat so that he wasn't crushed by the crowds. Whatever the reason for people seeking Jesus out, Jesus received them all. Only the demons who shriek the truth about Jesus does he silence. Jesus really came to seek and to save, to serve rather than to be served.

Read Mark 3:13-19

Jesus Appoints the Twelve Apostles

- What extraordinary event does Mark record in these verses? Jesus chooses his twelve apostles. Luke 6:12 tells us that Jesus spent the night alone in prayer. Jesus had many disciples but only twelve apostles (those he would personally send out with his message). These apostles would be sent out not to seek their own fame and glory but to build the kingdom of Jesus Christ. With the message of his kingdom Jesus has also called us to faith and service. What a gracious gift from God!

- How does the very ordinariness of the apostles comfort us? Most of us aren't really all that special either. If only I could be as devoted to him as he has been to me.

- What do we know about these apostles? There is not a lot said about these apostles as individuals. Jesus the Savior remains the focus of attention. (For what we know about them, read the last paragraph on page 80 to the bottom of page 81.)

- Why did Jesus give the apostles the power to drive out demons and perform other miracles? The miracles confirmed that Jesus had sent them. After they died the performance of miracles declined. The confirmation of their message today is found in the faith it creates within us. Faith that endures comes through the faithful preaching of God's Word. Miracles may indeed still happen but our focus is on God's Word. The recorded miracles of the Apostles are few and the Bible warns us against the false prophets who perform great signs and wonders (Matthew 24:4-24). The razzle-dazzle of the miracles often turns the focus away from Christ and leads to teachings contrary to God's Word.

Read Mark 3:20-30

Jesus Has Power to Drive Out Demons

- How popular is Jesus at this moment? He cannot even have a quiet and private meal with his disciples. He is at the height of his popularity. Jesus surrenders his own convenience.

- Why are Jesus' relatives and the Pharisees upset with him? The relatives think Jesus is out of his mind. The Pharisees, the experts from Jerusalem, think that Jesus is in cahoots with the devil. Their hostility cannot be easily dismissed.
- Analyze Jesus' public defense. What is Satan's goal? To build his kingdom and to capture souls, filling them with misery and slavery to sin. Satan would certainly not start a civil war in his own kingdom. Jesus' argument is logical and obvious. Jesus is the Almighty One, so powerful that Satan must flee from him. Indeed, it is Jesus' enemies who are the ones under the devil's control.
- What is the eternal sin against the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit's special work is to create faith, to overcome our unbelief and inborn hatred of God, through the proclamation of the gospel. Those who plug their ears against God's Word stubbornly, persistently, wickedly, and through their own fault will never be attached to Jesus. Jesus died for all but those who refuse to believe will never be saved.
- What would you say to someone who because of his own doubts and struggles with temptation lives in the fear of having committed this sin? One who has such fears has not committed the sin which is committed only by open and vicious haters of the gospel. Jesus makes clear the verdict for those like the Pharisees who would ridicule and mock those who are followers of Jesus. Indeed, they have allied themselves with the devil.

Read Mark 3:21-35

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

- Who are Jesus' brothers? We don't know for a certainty that they were the children of Joseph and Mary. Joseph's last mention is with Jesus as a 12 year old at the temple. Those who claim Mary remained a virgin after Jesus' birth have no scriptural reason for saying so. Some want to exalt Mary to a position almost equal to Jesus. The truth is that Mary is mentioned only rarely in Scripture. These brothers do not yet see Jesus as the Son of God and as the Messiah. Perhaps all the fame and attention Jesus was getting made their own lives a little more difficult. Even Mary was there to try and curb Jesus in.
- How does Jesus handle this awkward and embarrassing moment? "Look," Jesus said. He is about to say something unexpected and amazing. He turns this moment into an opportunity for a most beautiful emphasis on the gospel's message. That relationship which should be the most intimate, most tender, most loving belongs to Jesus' family of believers. Jesus came to bring us into his family. Jesus here uses a singular verb. Whoever believes in Jesus' words is personally one Jesus calls his brother or sister. Treasure these words of Jesus. They remind us that our relationship with Jesus is the only one that will last forever. (Mark now will shift our attention from Jesus' miraculous proof of his deity to Jesus' teaching.)

Mark 4

Read Mark 4:1-9

The Parable of the Sower

- Focus on Jesus' word Listen. Jesus calls us to pay careful and strict attention to what he is about to say. This will require some considerable thought.

- Consider Jesus' use of parables. In each of his parables Jesus captures the whole of the Christian's life and explains it in a way that causes us to reevaluate where we are in our relationship with him. Each parable has one central point. But at the same time, each parable has almost inexhaustible ways to apply that point.
- Share the earthly story about the sower. The sower has a bag of seed around his neck. He walks along and scatters the seed across the field. Some seed ends up where it cannot sprout, some falls on soil where there are rocks beneath the surface, some falls where there are thorns and thistles. But the sower's labor is not altogether wasted. Some seed falls on good and well prepared soil. The fate of the seed is predictable.
- What is the only way for this parable to benefit us? Use your ears to listen, to really listen to the voice of Jesus.

Read Mark 4:10-13

- Why did Jesus teach in parables? Jesus used parables so that those who were not interested in listening to him would remain ignorant. Only those to whom Jesus reveals the secrets of God can know and enter his kingdom. The kingdom of God is God's ruling activity in the hearts of those who hear Jesus' Word, believe it, and thus trust him as God and their only Savior.
- How is listening to Jesus central in becoming part of his kingdom? Regardless of a person's station in life, the unbeliever hears Jesus' words but they go in one ear and out the other. What plugs his ears? Pride, his own cleverness, guilt, favorite sins wed them to his unbelief. The unbelief is the person's own fault, not Jesus. And what about us? What if we don't understand Jesus' parable? Then let us confess that we don't understand and beseech Jesus to tell us more and to explain the mystery.

Read Mark 4:14-20

- How does God's kingdom always come? It always has to do with Jesus' word, the Bible.
- When the word is sown, why do many ignore it or reject it? Seed on the path, people hear but Satan takes it away before they ever believe it. Seed on rocky ground, people believe for a short time and they gladly hear the message of God's grace, full and free. But their joy is short-lived. Persecution on the outside or from the inside of their own hearts scorches their new-found faith and it burns away. They find that they really don't want Jesus' ruling activity in their hearts. They really want to be their own god and their own bible. Seed among the thorns, here too the seed sprouts and faith grows in people's hearts but it doesn't last. Their problems, riches, stuff wears them down and push out the rule of Christ. What if, what if, what if consumes this person and trust in the King is choked off.
- Apply Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed to yourself. We always need to cling ever more tightly to Jesus and his word, which never lies or deceives. Be extremely careful to let the living and fruit-bearing seed of Christ's word live and rule in your heart.
- Note how tightly joined together is the sower with the seed. Jesus himself by his life, death, and resurrection and his message of forgiveness are the very center of the seed and its power to produce faith and fruit. The fruit is a life like Jesus' life, a life lived not for self but in the service of those around us.

- Can you at times find all these different soils in your own heart and life? In our sinful hearts that will always be true. Jesus describes the sowing with a present tense verb: the sowing continues and is never really finished in this life. How often have rocks and thorns and thistles, worries and wealth and pleasure and cares about stuff, taken control of our lives and kept the seed from bearing fruit? I need Jesus to sow his seed in my heart every day. And some plants produce little fruit and some much. Examine the fruit that your life is producing day by day. This parable in an instant captures all of my Christian life, from the sowing of the seed at my baptism to my confession on my dying bed. In all his parables Jesus shows us our need to receive Jesus' word in our hearts and for Jesus to build his kingdom within us every day.

Read Mark 4:21-25

A Lamp and a Lampstand

- How does the kingdom of God act as a light? The mystery of Jesus' kingdom is never to be kept secret. A lamp has no other purpose than to give light. So also the light of God's Word is to shine forth for one's own benefit and for the benefit of others.

- Apply Jesus' imagery of light in everyday life and in spiritual life. On the first day of creation, God created light. Without this light there would be no purpose in any of the rest of creation. Without light we could see neither the splendor of God's creation nor make use of it. Likewise without the light of Jesus there would be little point to our existence. We would live and die without hope, without peace, without joy. The lampstand without light is without point or purpose. The reception of Jesus' light is totally his doing. The Christian life after that is our living with Jesus as the source of that light. Without Jesus we can do nothing. Now where will we put that light - under our beds or on a lampstand?

- To what in this parable does Jesus want us to pay attention? All that we receive from Jesus is grace; all that we have received is ours for the purpose of living in this light and for sharing it with others.

- What warning does Jesus give us in this parable? Jesus is very serious about the light and the secrets he has given us to share. The warning is that if we don't share the light, we may lose it. The one who receives Jesus' Word will always receive more and then more still. Jesus' activity is primary but our responsibility is important too, What glory it is that Jesus chooses to build his kingdom through us.

Read Mark 4:26-29

Seed Sprouts and Grows

- What secret of the kingdom of God does Jesus reveal here? The sower here is Jesus or the sub-sower that Jesus sends out. We may sleep but Jesus does not. We are not to worry about the seed we are sowing. The power of the seed will grow in the soil that receives it. Sometimes we fear that the soil is remaining barren producing no good fruit. That's not our problem or concern. Just keep sowing the seed, not a hybrid but the genuine seed of God's pure Word.

- How does the seed finally produce a harvest? It takes time for the seed to sprout, grow and reach the time of harvest. The results belong to God who in his mystery builds Jesus' kingdom one person at a time. The final harvest comes with the death of the individual or when Jesus swings his sickle over the whole earth and into every cemetery. We at times get delightful hints of this harvest. This is one of the ways Jesus encourages us sub-sowers. How kind and generous of him.

Read Mark 4:30-34

Mustard Seed

- Compare the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. (Read summary of the parables thus far, page 114 first paragraph in *Your Kingdom Come*.) That seed in appearance is tiny and undistinguished. The secret of that mustard seed can only be seen when it is sown and grows into an impressive garden plant.

- Compare the appearance of earthly kingdoms with the coming of Jesus' kingdom. Earthly kingdoms come into appearance with an impressive ruler and by a force of arms. The appearance of Jesus' kingdom and his Word is entirely insignificant. There Jesus is: in a manger, only a poor carpenter to guard him and a peasant girl to nurse him, There Jesus is: on the cross, getting a lot of attention - all bad, The whole world is a witness to his humiliation and seeming powerlessness. And then there is the great moment of his glory: his resurrection which no one notices, his visible appearances after the resurrection are seen only by a small number, his ascension to glory is witnessed only by a few unimportant people.

- How does Jesus' kingdom come today? Now Jesus is present in his Word and sacraments. But what are they? Just mustard seeds, from beginning to end thought of not at all or forgotten in an instant. (Read second paragraph of *Your Kingdom Come* commentary, page 116.)

ÿ- How has Christ's kingdom in this world blessed even the unbelievers who nest like birds under its shade? Continuing reading page 116-117 of *Your Kingdom Come*.

Read Mark 4:35-41

Jesus Calms the Storm

- Are you surprised that Jesus was so exhausted that he falls asleep and not even a fierce storm can wake him? Jesus truly has taken on our form and nature. He has clothed himself in humility and hidden the divine. He will use the divine when he deems it necessary for those in need. But otherwise he subjects himself to human need.

- How did the disciples fail their test? Jesus had filled them up with his teaching and miracles. Thus when troubled times follow pleasant ones, they should have put their trust in Jesus. God often uses times of affliction to test his children and to find out how much they have grown in their faith in Christ.

- How intense was the storm? Fierce storms on the Sea of Galilee were common. Often boats were sunk and people were lost. Its intensity exhausts all the disciples' energies and they become convinced that they all were about to drown.

- Is being a Christian and living with Jesus a guarantee of a trouble-free life? You know from your own experience that it just isn't so.

- How might we act like Jesus' disciples? We too pray to Jesus to help us, yet we lack the faith to trust Jesus' love, willingness, and power to help. Jesus had promised the disciples that they would be fishers of men. This would not be possible if they were found on the bottom of the sea. And what promises has Jesus given to us? Though in the moment we may not be able to see or understand, in all things God will keep his promises to us. All things will work for our eternal good and/or the eternal good of others. This sometimes is a hard lesson to learn.

- Does Jesus call his disciples cowards? Yes, as revealed by their inability to trust Jesus. Marvel at Jesus' patience with them and with us. Why were the disciples afraid? Because they had failed to truly listen to Jesus. If they had, they would have trusted that Jesus even sleeping

was in control and was always able to keep his word. Yet how difficult it is to believe this when the troubles of life come crashing down.

- What is the disciples' response to Jesus' miracle? They were awestruck. But why? Hadn't they already witnessed the power of Jesus' miracles. But sometimes it takes a special terror to help us learn that Jesus is not the one who has been sleeping.

Mark 5

Read Mark 5:1-5

A Demon-Possessed Man and a Herd of Pigs

- Show that the nature of the devil is truly evil and destructive. Don't be deceived by the devil's temptations and masks. The devil is always the roaring lion seeking to destroy us. The devil is not a kitty cat to be petted and played with.

- What does it mean that this man was demon-possessed? Body and soul he was under the power of the devil and his underlings. He was not epileptic or mentally ill. He had tremendous strength, but to do what? To terrorize those who came near and then to inflict unending pain on himself. This man lived among the dead. This was a proper home for one already spiritually dead. Night and day he would shriek out his incurable pain, cursing God and man and his own miserable condition. Could this be a description of hell?

Read Mark 5:6-8

- When Jesus appears on the shore, what might we have expected the demon-possessed man to do? Flee. But no, the demons have been waiting for him. Jesus was to them as a flame to a moth. They just couldn't stay away.

- Compare the demon-possessed man's voice to Jesus' voice. He screams and shrieks. Their voice (many demons) was filled with terror, Jesus' voice is calm with grace and blessing.

- What did the demons want from Jesus? They want Jesus not to torment them. How unreasonable and wicked! They were already doomed and damned since their fall at the beginning of creation. Their judgment was fixed and final (Jude 6). They want Jesus to change his mind and leave them alone. But the whole point of Jesus coming was to crush and destroy the devil's head. Satan wants Jesus to forget God's Word and not take it seriously. So also Satan would want us to pick and chose the parts of God's Word that please us and to throw out all the rest.

- Beware of the devil's lies. Read *Your Kingdom Come*, page 130, beginning with the first full paragraph.

Read Mark 5:9-13

- Why does Jesus ask the demon about his name? Jesus is not looking for information. The question and the answer underscore the impotence of the devil and the invincible power of Jesus. Jesus asks this question for our sakes. For Jesus the number of demons (a legion in the Roman army was six thousand men) makes no difference; it's never going to be a fair, one-on-one fight!

- Why does Jesus grant their ridiculous request to go into the pigs? Pigs in the law of Moses were unclean animals. Unclean demons into unclean animals - how fitting. The demons will be in hell no matter where they are. Point of emphasis: Look and see how wicked and

beyond reason the devil is. So, which side do you want to be on and whose voice do you want to follow?

- Why does Jesus permit the destruction of the pigs? Yes, the owners did suffer an enormous loss but we conclude from Jesus' action that it was well deserved. For Jews to own pigs, raise them, slaughter them was a flagrant violation of God's law. Here Jesus uses the wicked to carry out his justice.

Read Mark 5:14-17

- Why was the response of the pig keepers and pig owners evil and irrational? The first reasonable thing for the pig keepers to do was to fall down before Jesus and to plead for mercy. But that's not what happens. They are fearful, not of Jesus and not of the demons, but of the owners who might blame them for their loss. The owners who lived in the town are no better. They knew about the demon-possessed man and now see his opposite behavior. Before screaming and cursing, running around wild and naked, violently shedding the ropes or chains used to tame him. Now sitting dressed and at peace, speaking sensibly. Seeing the happy and blessed result of Jesus' presence, they plead with him to leave their region.

- How does the world still often react to Christians whose lives are peaceful and orderly? They openly despise them and hold them up to ridicule. Are you surprised?

Read Mark 5:18-20

- What is the demon-possessed's thankful petition? He wanted to go with Jesus.

- What is Jesus' gracious answer? He gives the man something even better to do. He would become Jesus' messenger of good news, proclaiming to others what Jesus had done for him. Note that here Jesus wanted the message of his miracle to be proclaimed and not left unpublished. The region of the Decapolis was predominantly ten Gentile cities where Jesus would spend only a little time. In his grace Jesus leaves behind a messenger, even to those who pleaded with Jesus to leave them. Those who would hear his message still remained the objects of Jesus' grace and goodness. What a contrast we see between good and evil.

Read Mark 5:21-23

The Daughter of Jairus

- What do we know about Jairus? He is a leader in the synagogue in Capernaum. Whether or not he had become a follower of Jesus we cannot say. He had the responsibility to watch out for this new teacher who had aroused such hostility from the Pharisees. But his anguish over his sick little girl overcame whatever worry he might have felt. As often, God used his anguish as a pre-evangelism program. His only daughter is dying (Luke 8:42). On his knees he pleads over and over again for Jesus to come and heal her.

- What does Jairus believe about Jesus? He knew Jesus had healed many others and he believed Jesus would have to come to his house to heal his daughter. He does not yet know that Jesus is the Lord, the creator of life who had come to defeat death.

Read Mark 5:24-34

- What do we know about the woman in the crowd? She is as lowly as Jairus is high on the social scale. Her condition is pathetic and her need is just as desperate. For twelve years - the age of Jairus' daughter - she had suffered from a discharge of blood. In the law of Moses (Leviticus 15:19-30) such a flow of blood made her ceremonially unclean for seven days after the flow stopped. Until then no one could touch her. Attendance at the synagogue or at festivals at the temple was unlikely. Who would she even want to talk to about her condition? To a considerable extent this would have separated her even from her family. She had done everything she could to find relief but to no avail. How often had she prayed that the next doctor would help? But he didn't. But then she heard about Jesus.

- What does this woman believe about Jesus? Jesus of whom she had heard so much had returned. He had even cleansed lepers. She does not believe that maybe Jesus could heal her. She is confident that he could. But how could she find the nerve to approach this holy man to beg for his help? She had spent twelve years trying to stay as hidden as possible. Yet she believes that Jesus is so powerful that only to touch him would be enough. Her trust in Jesus is stronger than that of Jairus. Do we not seek to touch Jesus in just the same way every time we pray?

- Was this woman to Jesus only an anonymous, invisible shadow? No, Jesus would not have that for this woman, or for us either. Jesus deals with each individual just as that individual needs. Jesus cares beyond measure for all the needy who come to him, one at a time.

- How did Jesus bless her beyond what she had hoped for? Jesus wanted her to know that he saw her faith and cared about her as an individual. Jesus was on a mission to help someone important. But no matter. This woman was just as significant to Jesus. Jesus' question was not asking for information. It was asked to assure this woman that she had not done something wrong and that Jesus truly cared about her.

- How does this woman respond to Jesus pointing her out? Trembling, she stumbles forward, falls at Jesus' feet and tells him everything. Twelve years of tears and prayers to which God had seemed to turn a deaf ear. Now she had put her hope in Jesus and her hope had not been disappointed.

- How does Jesus assure her that she had done nothing wrong? He calls her daughter. She was a daughter of God, dearly loved and cared for. Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well. Remember that this faith, all faith that trusts in Jesus, is a gift from Jesus himself. This is the same faith that brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life and help in every need. Jesus praises her act of faith and tells her that she could go in peace. How touching. How cheering. How encouraging for faith. Thus Jesus confirms her faith and gives it his blessing for the future. This is the good news of the kingdom that comes from the King who also wants to give us peace and healing. (Read paragraph before verse 35, page 143 in *Your Kingdom Come*.)

Read Mark 5:35-43

- What thunder clap sounds in Jairus' ears? His daughter is dead and those who tell him think that Jesus can no longer help. Don't bother Jesus? Really? That Jesus would ever consider Jairus' need a bother, a matter of no concern to Jesus?

- What gentle yet powerful words does Jesus speak to Jairus? Don't be afraid. Only believe. Hear the powerful word of the King! Don't listen to the disparaging words of your friends.

- Why does Jesus separate himself from the crowd? Jesus knew exactly what he was about to do. How popular Jesus could have become if this miracle was performed before a crowd. But the purpose of Jesus' miracles was to get people to listen to the message of his kingdom of grace. The miracles were not the end in themselves. In fact, often they would become a distraction from the primary message of the kingdom. Also, Jesus' concern was not for his popularity but pastoral care for an anguished and grieving soul. How kind! How sensitive to Jairus' need.

- Why the commotion in the synagogue ruler's house and why did those people laugh at Jesus? It was Jewish practice that funerals take place on the same day a person died. This did not leave time to inform all the friends and relatives. So professional mourners were hired, usually elderly women who would weep and howl and beat their breasts and pull their hair. Joining them in their racket were horn players of some sort. They laughed when Jesus said that the girl was not dead but only sleeping. As far as they were concerned, Jesus was now getting in the way of their business.

- What comfort does Jesus give us with his words, The child is not dead but sleeping? We have Jesus' promise and God's promise that death is only temporary, like a sleep, from which we will one day be awakened. We tend to look at our lives, especially in times of suffering, as ever the same, and then comes the end. God looks at things as how he intends them to end, and death is not the end. We have only the promise of God that this is true, but for us that's enough.

- What happened when Jesus said to the little girl, Talitha, koum!? Jesus, Shepherd-King and pastor, now displays both his power and his tender compassion. With two Aramaic words he breathes life back into her body and raises her up from her bed. She gets up and starts walking, just like a healthy twelve-year-old girl. The parents and his three disciples were amazed. Jesus tells them to give the girl something to eat but also not to tell others about the miracle.

- Why didn't Jesus want these people to share their ecstatic joy with others? Jesus didn't want the miracle to detract from his message. He didn't want to be seen as just a miracle worker. Jesus *isn't* ready yet to have everything that he has done to prove that he is indeed God, the Son of God with authority to raise the dead, proclaimed. His primary mission was still before him, the cross where he would die to pay for the sins of the world. Matthew 9:26 tells us that news of this miracle spread throughout the entire region anyway.

- How comforting to know that he who controls all things in heaven and on earth cares about our every need - large and small. Read the last three paragraphs beginning on the bottom of page 150 of *Your Kingdom Come*.

Mark 6

Read Mark 6:1-6

A Prophet Without Honor

- What does Jesus do when he returns to Nazareth? On the Sabbath he goes to the synagogue and begins to teach.

- What kind of reception might he have expected? His fame had already spread far and wide. Shouldn't his hometown have celebrated his return? It was customary in those days to invite visiting rabbis or scholars to speak. Luke (Luke 4:18-21) tells us Jesus read to them Isaiah 61:1-2 which prophesied the work of the Messiah and proclaims that he himself is the fulfillment of this prophesy.

- What kind of reception did Jesus receive? The response of the people is instant and electric. They reject Jesus' words and take offense at him. All they do is talk about his family background and contemptuously mock him. Nothing is said about the miracles he has performed. Luke tells us that they take Jesus to the edge of the town and want to throw him off a cliff.

- What does Jesus mean when he says, A prophet is not without honor except in his own hometown? Could it be that Jesus quotes this proverb to comfort the few who did come to him for healing and listened to his word? It would have encouraged them not to be swayed by the unbelief of the many. Jesus didn't have any patience with evil or false doctrine. But he had much patience with those who were weak. Jesus did not repay the people of Nazareth with the hatred they should have received. He left and continued his work in that region. These people will still hear about his preaching and teaching and miracles. His desire was still that they repent and return to him.

Read Mark 6:7-13

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

- How did the Twelve respond to Jesus' rejection at Nazareth? They continue to trust in Jesus and are ready to serve as his witnesses. In their service they would be super-rich in things to give to others and super-poor in things to have for themselves. They would have power to perform miracles but no extra provisions for themselves. They would still have enough. Their concern was to focus on the assignment - to give away God's kingdom.

- Who was the ultimate source of their success? The messengers always remain dependent on Jesus. Jesus certified their work with miracles. Later the miracles would cease as the fruit of their labor, the creation and preservation of faith, would be sufficient. By the message of the gospel the Holy Spirit breathes into the heart and brings the dead to life.

- What was to be their response to those who refused to listen? They were not just to leave. (Oh, well; everybody has his own opinions.) Those rejecting the gift of the messenger lose the kingdom of God, his grace and forgiveness, his gift of life eternal. To show this the twelve were to shake the dust off their feet. Ultimately those who spurn the Word of God will get what they want, total freedom from the Word and its blessings.

- What about their anointing the sick with oil before they performed their miracles? We never hear of that in the gospels again. Jesus on very rare occasions used some external element to make a point (Mark 8:23) but never as a medicinal prelude to a miracle of healing. Anointing with oil was used in a medicinal manner to ease suffering, but never as a sacrament to give forgiveness of sins (Extreme Unction).

Read Mark 6:14-20

Recalling the Death of John the Baptizer

- Who are the people mentioned here? Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great whose kingdom was broken into four parts when he died. Herod Antipas ruled over Galilee. Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, the half-brother of Herod Antipas. She married her uncle Philip (also called Herod) who was disinherited and lived in a sort of semi-exile with

Herodias and her daughter Salome in Rome. While visiting Rome (or Jerusalem), scholars differ on this point, Herod Antipas, already married to the daughter of King Aretas, an Arabian king, took up with Herodias and they eloped. (The daughter of King Aretas ran home. King Aretas later made war in revenge and devastated parts of Herod's territory.) Herod Antipas we meet again in the Passion history. As a result of a number of bungled political moves with Rome, he was ultimately removed and exiled to Gaul with Herodias. There he died in A.D.39.

- What are we told about the interesting conscience of Herod Antipas, the puny puppet ruler? When the question comes up as to who Jesus is, he concludes that he is John the Baptist risen from the dead. If so, Herod had reasons to tremble. Others were saying that Jesus was Elijah or a prophet of old. Herod had gladly listened to John. How much better if he had listened to Jesus. Herod's twisted conscience troubled him but he had no repentance.

Read Mark 6:21-29

- What happened on Herod's birthday? Herodian birthday celebrations were famous for their excess and caused the coining of the term a Herodian day. All the prominent people of Galilee were there. Excess and drunkenness were expected. We get the impression that the wily Herodias was lurking in the wings, seeing this as the opportune time for her to get rid of John the Baptist. Salome danced and received from Herod a blank check. She demands on a platter the head of John the Baptist right now. Herod keeps his drunken promise. It makes him sad but there still is no repentance.

- What lesson can we learn here about peer pressure? Let young and old who yield to peer pressure take note of where it leads. Don't fear other people more than God. It is an illusion to believe that one can innocently enjoy the companionship of evil. 1 Corinthians 15:33.

- What closing comment are we told about John? John's disciples honor him without fear or embarrassment. Jesus says of John that there was no greater prophet. Nor did one suffer a more humiliating death. Yes, John decreased while Jesus increased. Mark recalls his death just after the disciples are sent out. What should the next generation of God's messengers conclude? The servant is not above his master. Truly Jesus' kingdom is a mystery. Yet the message proclaimed continues to go out into all the world.

Read Mark 6:30-34

Jesus Feeds More Than Five Thousand

- The apostles' return with what reports? Those sent out with a message report on their successes. The sender is always the one with authority and the message carries with it the power of the sender.

- Ponder that suffering and success are next door neighbors. Read two paragraphs of *Your Kingdom Come* beginning with last full paragraph on page 170.

- Why did Jesus take his disciples away from the crowds? To strengthen them he wants to spend some time alone with them. Soon the time for quiet instruction would come to an end. Also, ceaseless service can finally leave the server empty. What quiet time do you have alone with Jesus?

- Imagine the scene of hundreds, then thousands of people following Jesus' boat across the sea. Jesus is at the high point of his popularity. Many who came were suffering from various diseases. Perhaps some had to be helped along or even carried.

- How did Jesus respond to their coming? His heart went out to them. Literally his stomach began to churn for them. How eagerly Jesus wanted to bless them and bring them into his kingdom.

Read Mark 6:35-44

- Late in the day what was the disciples' concern? The crowd stays and listens to Jesus so intently that the disciples worry about their physical well-being. John 6 indicates that Jesus sent Philip to look for some provisions but only five loaves (flat breads, almost like pancakes) and two small preserved fish had been found, the lunch of a boy. How much did their worry about food cause them to miss out on Jesus' teaching?

- Were the disciples right to be concerned about this food issue? There was no easy access to food, especially for so large a crowd. The problem was real and getting quite serious. Yet! They forgot about the power of Jesus.

- With what new lesson does Jesus test the disciples? Jesus gives them an impossible assignment. Augustine once wrote: Jesus commands and then he gives what he gives what he commands. Note that the disciples fail the test.

- How did Jesus feed the more than five thousand? Jesus took control. He had the crowd sit down in orderly squares of 50 or so, said grace and fed the crowd. He breaks off pieces, the disciples become waiters, and the people are fed until they were full, with twelve basketfuls of pieces left over. What would be God's advice to us when we seek to balance stewardship and faithless greed? Note: This is one of those rare times when all four gospels record a miracle, hinting at a major change in Jesus' life.

Read Mark 6:45-46

Jesus Walks on Water

- How does Jesus prepare himself for the marked change in his ministry that was coming? No free food for everyone. No casting out the Romans. No bringing heaven to earth. Jesus faced his coming suffering by spending private time with God in prayer.

- Apply this to the work of the church today. Many want the church to be more involved in social justice and making this world a better place to live. The physical pushes out the spiritual. The needs of the soul, abundantly provided for by Jesus in his Word, remain our priority.

- If Jesus knew the errors of the crowds and the weakness of his disciples, then why did he feed the 5000? Yes, there is not a blessing of Jesus that we cannot turn into a sin. Yet Jesus gives us his blessings and calls us to love him more than his blessings.

- Why did Jesus make his disciples get into the boat and then go up on the mountain alone? Could it be that Jesus knew how easily his disciples could have shared the crowd's desire to make him a king? With no one to talk to who could really understand, Jesus talks to his Father. Jesus' heart is always devoted to his Father's honor and our salvation. If we suppose that Jesus sent his disciples away between six and nine in the evening, he then would have had several hours to spend in prayer with his Father.

Read Mark 6:47-50

- How does the roller coaster ride continue for Jesus' disciples? Remember the high of the mission they carried out for Jesus, the low of John the Baptist's death, the high of Jesus' feeding the 5000, and now the low of facing a stormy death. The disciples need to learn again

that apart from really listening to Jesus, not just hearing him, they know nothing. In the midst of this storm the need of the disciples could not be greater. Yet their greatest need was to remember what Jesus had taught them and to put their trust in Jesus in every need.

- What was the disciples' response when they saw Jesus walking on water? They are terrified. They were on the brink of their boat sinking and their drowning. The specter of Jesus appearing only adds to their terror. At first they do not recognize him. They assume he's a ghost, maybe even the angel of death. Jesus seems ready to walk right past them.

- How does Jesus cast out their despair? Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid. Mark tells us that Jesus said this immediately. All human reason is to be set aside. Jesus is talking. This makes all the difference in the world. The powerful Word of the law kills us and brings us to despair. The powerful Word of the gospel gives us God's grace which enables us to trust in Jesus and to look to Jesus for rescue. Matthew adds the account of Peter's walking on water.

Read Mark 6:51-56

- When did the wind stop blowing? As soon as Jesus climbed into the boat. And the disciples were completely amazed.

- What does it mean that the disciples' hearts were hardened? How often we too fail to understand about the loaves and our hearts block out the promises of Jesus.

- What happened when Jesus landed at Gennesaret? John 6 tells us that Jesus and his disciples arrived immediately in Bethsaida-Capernaum. From the middle of the lake, three or four miles from shore, the next moment they are at the shore. The next day Jesus' ministry continued. Mark omits Jesus' discourse about being the bread of life and the angry hostility that now began to arise against Jesus. Marvel at the constant love Jesus continued to have and to show to the people.

Mark 7

Read Mark 7:1-5

Commandments and Traditions

- Mark the heightening opposition of the Jewish officials. The Pharisees and the scribes considered themselves guardians of the law. They were highly respected, especially those who came from Jerusalem. They appeared both to understand and to keep the hundreds of rules (traditions) that had been invented over the centuries.

- What charge do these Jewish officials' level against Jesus? They charge Jesus' disciples with breaking the traditions by eating with unwashed hands. Their goal was to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people. It is interesting that these leaders do not attack what really matters, Jesus' gospel teaching. Is this not often so even within the church? What gets people upset and excited is not Jesus' teaching but the new carpet or the sign outside or about cutting down a tree that grandpa planted. This washing of the hands was not about hygiene but about ceremonial uncleanness. As so often happened, these traditions which had nothing to do with God's Word became even more important.

- Comment on wash and washing (verse 4) and baptism. These are the Greek words otherwise translated as "baptism". The baptizing of tables reminds us that how much water is applied at baptism is not important.

Read Mark 7:6-13

- Why does Jesus call these Jewish officials hypocrites? Jesus does not come at them for observing traditions. Traditions can be a good thing. However, traditions were not fixed in stone. If they contradict or obscure God's Word, they can be set aside. Honoring God not only with one's lips but also with one's heart is far more important. The hypocrite (under a mask) hides his true feelings about God and his Word.
- How had these Jewish officials abandoned God's fourth commandment? Their tradition enabled them to escape helping their parents in need by designating that money as a gift to the church. How pious it sounded. (Jesus is here finished with those who placed their honored traditions over God's clear Word.)

Read Mark 7:14-23

- What makes a person unclean in God's eyes? That which comes out of the heart and out of their mouths, false teaching which corrupts God's Word. Apply this to Adam and Eve eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The fruit wasn't evil but the disobedience of the human heart was. In verses 20-23 Jesus broadens the application of the principal that the source of uncleanness is the human heart.
- How is the human heart like a volcano? It's churning deep down inside of us, a bubbling evil, always ready and about to explode in action. How often we try to keep this human heart hidden, masked, but it never stays in place very long.

- Read again Jesus' list of those sins which make a person unclean. (What commandments are being broken?) Note how often we too are guilty of such sins. Most of these sins are obvious. A little extra attention on: wickedness, the kind that comes out of malice, that rejoices in the misfortune of others, that looks for an opportunity for us to play God; deceit, the hypocrisy that lies just under the surface. I want to get even and yet look good; foolishness, a lack of moral or intellectual sense, the wasting of time and money on things that serve no useful purpose, things that openly and blatantly contradict God's Word.

- What is the only cure for the unclean heart? The confession of our own wicked heart (I confess that I am by nature...) and then looking to God for cleansing and forgiveness in Jesus. The cry of the tax collector in the temple is echoed in our everyday lives. This is the only kind of worship of people who honor God with their lips and with their lives.

- Does Jesus just ignore the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees? Oh, no. He censures the false teachers and rejects their false teaching. His true teaching about the kingdom of God is necessary, not just a matter of traditions. Those who tamper with God's Word will come under God's judgment. God always takes his Word seriously. Eternity is here at stake, both for those who teach falsely and for those who are deceived.

Read Mark 7:24-31

The Faith of a Gentile Woman

- Why did Jesus not want anyone to know where he was? Jesus withdraws from Galilee. The opposition to him is growing. The Pharisees considered the region of Tyre and Sidon to be inherently unclean and would not follow him. The disciples still had a lot to learn and Jesus wanted time to continue to instruct them. All are greatly blessed who find some private time to spend with Jesus.

- What are we told about a Gentile woman who seeks Jesus out? She was Greek, of Syro-Phoenician origin. Her little daughter had an unclean spirit. Alone this mother suffered. Alone the daughter raved and raged. She had heard about Jesus and now seeks him out, falling at his feet. Her pain and suffering served as a chariot to carry her to Jesus.
- What might this mother have heard about Jesus? She has heard not only of his power but also of his compassion, that Jesus had turned no one away. Matthew tells us that this woman kept on pleading with Jesus for some time. She even addresses him as Son of David, the name for the Messiah.
- What is Jesus' surprising response to her? Jesus appears to ignore her, not to care about her.
- What is Jesus' disciples' response to her? Their response is shocking. They don't care about her need and are totally unsympathetic. They want to get rid of her. She is a bother and a pest. Besides that, she's a gentile, an unclean foreigner. Even after Pentecost Jewish believers and even the apostles at times had to learn that Jesus' love extends to all people. How easy it is to see uncleanness in others and not in ourselves.
- Follow how Jesus treats this woman. First he ignores her. Then he calls her a little dog.
- How did Jesus feed the children first? God had promised the Messiah and his work first to Israel. Jesus' ministry did focus first on the Jews. But note Jesus' little word first. The implication is that the little dogs would be fed also in due course.
- How does this woman show herself to be a better theologian than the disciples? She truly listened to Jesus and understood what he said. She grabs on to Jesus' words and holds him to them.
- How does Jesus respond to her response? Jesus praises her faith that grabbed hold of and would not let go of the gospel crumbs Jesus had given to her. How Jesus delights in such faith. Even in the face of apparent hardness and hostility and God's indifference to a cry for help, she will not let go of what Jesus has just said to her. And Jesus drove the demon out of her daughter.

Read Mark 7:32-37

Ephphatha! Be Opened!

- What do we know about a man who is now brought to Jesus? He had to be brought to Jesus by others. He is deaf and had never heard anyone speak to him. The kingdom of heaven with its call to repentance had never been heard by him. And, of course, he has a speech impediment. His world is one of silent emptiness. So why bring him to Jesus? Jesus had now returned to the Decapolis. Could it be that those who brought the man to Jesus had learned about Jesus from the demon-possessed man Jesus had healed and left behind?
- Why does Jesus take him aside in private? This poor man must have been terrified. He understood none of it. Jesus could have just healed this man in an instant. But Jesus understands the needs of each individual and deals with each individual as best suits that person's needs. Remember this when words and speech cannot convey the anguish of your soul!
- What sign language does Jesus use in this miracle? He puts his fingers into the man's ears. He spits and touches the man's tongue. He sighs as he looks up to heaven. In this way Jesus is telling him that God knew who he was and that he, Jesus, would now help him.
- Ephphatha! Be Opened! Mark, whose gospel alone contains this miracle, records the specific Aramaic word Jesus spoke. Say the word aloud. It has such a soft and gentle sound, almost just the sound of a breath. And then behold again the power of Jesus' word. A man born

deaf and speechless now even has a vocabulary. He doesn't just babble. He speaks plainly. He hears others talking and he understands them. No wonder people were amazed beyond measure.

- Ponder how graciously God has given to you ears to hear and a voice to speak. Also in our lives Jesus has done everything well. His Word remains the effective means of grace, miraculously providing and preserving faith within us - from the time of our baptism. Ponder all these things and never forget the primary purpose of these gifts.

- Why does Jesus give strict orders to the people not to tell anyone of this miracle? The number of months remaining before his passion is shrinking. Jesus does not want to fan the flames of his popularity that will only get in the way of his goal.

- How do the people respond to Jesus' command? They proclaim to others this miracle all the more. Note: when Jesus commands nature, it cannot disobey; when Jesus commands people, he wants their obedience to flow from faith and a grateful love. On judgment day Jesus will hold such obedience up before all the saints and angels as beautiful evidence of the faith his Word created and sustained. Note also again how Jesus' compassion overwhelms his own interests.

Mark 8

Read Mark 8:1-10

Jesus Feeds More Than Four Thousand

- What differences do you see between Jesus feeding the four thousand and the five thousand? Once again a large crowd gathers on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. There doesn't seem to be the same drama to Jesus' presence this time. The people don't try to make Jesus their king. The people stay with Jesus for three days and he continues to teach them. The disciples have learned to trust Jesus. There is no concern expressed about feeding the crowd. Jesus brings up the subject. The reaction to the miracle also seems to be so orderly and unspectacular. Other differences: seven loaves (flat cakes, like pancakes) instead of five; seven basketfuls of bread picked up, not twelve. (The word used for basket here is the same word that is used in Acts 9:25, when Paul is let down from the Damascus wall in a basket.)

- Recognize Jesus' concern for body and soul. Jesus again is moved with compassion for the people in their need, his stomach churned for them. What comfort there is here for us. Jesus longs for our salvation. Jesus also has concern for the needs of the body. We can bring before him any concern we have for body or for soul. Note also that Jesus' compassion is never idle pity. It is always active. What a wonderful Savior and King we have in Jesus.

- What do the two miracles of feeding thousands testify about Jesus? Jesus is indeed God and the thousands who benefitted from those miracles could testify to this.

Read Mark 8:11-13

A Sign From Heaven

- Why did the Pharisees come to Jesus? (Matthew includes the Sadducees in this confrontation.) Their attitude about Jesus has not changed. They come to argue with Jesus and to test him.

- Why did they ask of Jesus a sign from heaven? How unreasonable unbelief can be. Jesus had already performed many signs from heaven. His miracles proved him to be the

promised Messiah. But the Pharisees are not satisfied. Jesus was not the Messiah they were wanting. They demanded a sign because they did not believe that Jesus could give it.

- What does Jesus' deep sigh express about Jesus? Jesus' deep sigh expressed his longing for the Pharisees' salvation and his frustration at the refusal of his grace. Consider Jesus' deep sigh when he wept over the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-38).

- Why did Jesus refuse to give them a sign from heaven? Jesus knew the unbelief in their hearts. Another sign would have accomplished nothing.

- What does Jesus mean with the word generation? The word generation often referred to those having a common ancestry. Here it refers to those who share a common set of characteristics. The wicked and persistent and inexcusable unbelief of many would continue and Jesus would not join himself together with avowed unbelievers. Woe to all who harden their hearts against Jesus. The bitter proof of who Jesus is will come in the hour of their death and on the final day of judgment. Woe to those Jesus leaves and to whom he stops speaking.

Read Mark 8:14-21

Watch Out for the Teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees

- Why did Jesus warn his disciples to "watch out for yeast"? False teaching like yeast may seem small and insignificant but it can be very destructive to the soul as it spreads and grows. There is no such thing as a little false teaching. We dare never take false teaching lightly. One church after another has fallen from the ranks of those faithful to God's Word. The results of yeast once it takes hold rarely can be reversed.

- Why was Jesus frustrated with his disciples? The dinner plate so easily and often takes precedence over Jesus' teaching and word. How could the disciples be so dense and so careless? Note the intensity of Jesus' rebuke. He piles on verbs. He involves all the parts of the intellect and will. Jesus expected their entire being to be devoted to watching, to listening, to absorbing, and to applying what Jesus has taught them. He didn't want them to also end up with a hardened heart. Jesus rebuked their inexcusable dullness but he didn't leave them or give up on them.

Read Mark 8:22-26

Jesus Heals a Blind Man

- How was the healing of this blind man different from Jesus' other miracles of healing? A blind man who somehow had lost his sight is brought to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to touch him but Jesus has his own way, his own perfect way, of doing things. Jesus removes the man from the hustle and bustle so that he can deal with him as an individual. How amazing Jesus' gentleness is to behold. Notice the strange way that Jesus heals him. Jesus spit on his eyes, touches him, and asks him if he sees anything. But his eyesight is only perfectly restored when Jesus touches his eyes a second time. We cannot say why Jesus healed in this way, but we know that Jesus gave the man exactly what he needed.

- How much of your life lies hidden deep inside? Jesus knows you perfectly and would also handle you gently, taking you by the hand. As no miracle of Jesus was quite the same, so also the manner in which Jesus will deal with each of us is as individuals.

- How does Jesus deal with each of us individually in the sacrament? Read Daniel Deutschlander's comment in italics on page 229.

Read Mark 8:27-30

Jesus Is the Christ

- Why does Jesus ask his disciples the question about who people say he is? He wants the disciples to have the answer clearly fixed in their minds. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is preparing them for his ultimate miracle, the cross and his resurrection. Jesus is fixed in his determination to suffer hell itself for us but the disciples were still not fully prepared for this.
- What do all the people's answers about who Jesus is have in common? They are all wrong. They all see Jesus as nothing more than a mortal, even if a special mortal. Jesus is the one John the Baptist and Elijah and the prophets spoke about, the coming Messiah.
- How do the disciples through Peter answer Jesus' second question? Jesus is the Christ (Greek), the Messiah (Hebrew), the Anointed One.

- Why does Jesus tell them that this correct answer was not yet ready for publication? The disciples still do not know everything about Jesus that was to be proclaimed. They too were still filled with worldly expectations about what the Christ would do. The full impact of what this statement says about Jesus will not be fully known until Pentecost.

Read Mark 8:31-33

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection

- Jesus began to teach them. When will the time for Jesus to teach us end? Never on this side of the grave.
- What is the summary content of our Christian faith? It is exactly what Jesus was teaching his disciples at this time. These verses will make our life worth living and will slam the gates of hell for us. These verses will make our death a joy and heaven a blessed reality.
- Why does Jesus call himself the Son of Man? This is the title Jesus used most often for himself. It is the title first used by Daniel for him (Daniel 7:13,14) where the Son of Man is worshiped as the everlasting, all-powerful God. He is the perfect descendant of the perfect creation, Adam. By virtue of the union of divine and human natures, Jesus came to carry out God's plan for our salvation.
- Why must the Son of Man suffer many things? Must brings us to consider things in life that are necessary rather than contingent. In God himself nothing is necessary. Nothing can be imposed on him, for he is nature's Creator and Sustainer. God alone is sublimely independent, needing nothing, needing no one. What is necessary is what God has freely chosen to make necessary. God must freely in grace act if we are to be redeemed. God cannot pay the price for what we did as we rebelled against God. A man must pay the price. And Jesus as the Son of Man chooses to do just that. He makes our salvation a necessity.
- Who can fathom what was about to happen to Jesus? The Lord of the church has determined that he will be rejected, judged unfit even to live, by his own church, by its leaders who unite only in this that Jesus be killed. Jesus must be put to death by those whose lives he holds in his own hands. His public humiliation will be total.
- Ponder a wonderful paradox. Read page 236 beginning with the first full paragraph into page 237 of *Your Kingdom Come*.
- Why does Peter take Jesus aside to rebuke him? The verb rebuke expresses a hostile, sharp scolding. So shocked was Peter by these words of Jesus. They were totally opposite of the messianic hopes of many Jews for a worldly kingdom.
- What is Jesus' response to Peter's rebuke? Well intended or not, Peter's response was inspired by Satan who would always contradict God's Word and think himself justified to do

so. Jesus perfectly sums up Peter's problem. The things of men would always be more popular than the notion that one should suffer for sin - not even Jesus. How popular the notion that we can all be our own Bible. That Peter would contradict Jesus' beautiful message of salvation proves how perverse mankind can be. God remains God and he has not repealed the truth of his holy Word. Those who fall into Peter's sin will have only themselves to blame.

Read Mark 8:34-9:1

Take Up the Cross

- What is the royal proclamation Jesus issues to us before his death and resurrection? This proclamation is not just for the disciples. It is for us all. Deny yourself, take up Jesus' cross and follow. The cross was the symbol of torture and a horrible death. The torture of the cross could last for days. The cross is what can be expected by those who follow Jesus. Only the cross of Jesus will make us ready and able to follow this command. This cross will need to be carried by Christians throughout their lives. It strikes at the heart of our fallen natures and calls us to self-denial. The cross is whatever we suffer because we are followers of Jesus. Consider the holy martyrs. Consider that wherever Jesus' Word is taught in its truth and purity, there will be opposition and often there is a price to pay. In everything Christians are to put Christ first and deny what their sinful flesh desires.

- What are the two most common temptations to refuse the cross of self-denial? The first is self-righteousness. This sin denies our sinfulness and total inability to contribute anything to our salvation. It feels good to think that we are not at the bottom with all the other sinners. The self-righteous may indeed do good things in this world but it is not out of love for or loyalty to Jesus. The self-righteous are very comfortable with themselves and expect that God is also very comfortable with them too, yes, even with their lesser sins. The self-righteous need to despair of their own merit and cling alone to the merit, the work, the promises of Christ. The second most common temptation to refuse the cross of Jesus is despair. It is very rational to despair when we think about all the sinful things we have done in our lives. Despair cries out that all is lost. It concludes that it is just not possible for God to love me. The self-righteous cast aside God's grace and mercy because they do not think it necessary. The despairing do so because they judge their sinfulness to be greater than God's grace and mercy. Satan who would minimize guilt for sin in the self-righteous would maximize the guilt of sin in those who are in despair. What a crushing cross is self-denial which requires us to beat back both temptations. Some people spend most of their lives bouncing from one ditch to the other. Both reject the work and Word of Jesus in favor of an unbelieving opinion. Only the miracle of the gospel can deliver us. Repentance is that struggle to deny self and thus to fight against both self-righteousness and despair.

- Of what does Jesus remind us whenever carrying our crosses for Jesus becomes difficult? Gaining the whole world is not worth the loss of our soul. Self-denial is indeed a life-long struggle but it is the struggle that makes the most sense and is eternally worth it.

- What does Jesus tell us about saving and losing life? Getting our own way is the very definition of saving one's life. Out of love for Jesus and out of loyalty to his Word we are to forget about self, whatever the cost may be, and desire only Jesus' way. That a person never fully masters selfish desires or wins this side of heaven should be obvious. Every day we need Jesus to continue to shower upon us his forgiving grace. The pain of the cross is for our sinful flesh; the joy of the soul is in the accomplished victory of Jesus.

- What is a sinful and adulterous generation? This refers to all who refuse a faithful marriage to Jesus. It consists of all who have devoted their lives to self.
- What happens when this generation mocks or criticizes Jesus or anything in his Word? Jesus will be ashamed of them when he comes again in his glory. How we shudder to think that this should ever happen to us. God, be merciful to me, a sinner who is too much tainted by this adulterous and sinful generation!
- What happens when we take up our cross and faithfully follow Jesus? Jesus will not be ashamed of us but will proclaim that we have been faithful - washed clean of all our sins by Jesus' blood. And all that we have done because of our love for Jesus and his Word will be remembered. What an incentive to fight the good fight of faith.
- Amen I tell you... How certain is this promise of Jesus? Jesus begins many of his most important promises with the word Amen.
- Of what is Jesus speaking when he talks here about the kingdom of God? Jesus' kingdom is God's ruling activity in the heart by means of gospel-created faith. At other times it can refer to God's rule over history. Here both can be meant. The visible power of Christ's kingdom will be seen on Pentecost. Christ's judging power will be seen in the year A.D. 70, when Jerusalem is utterly destroyed. The disciples would also see the power of Jesus' abiding presence as his Word goes out into the world and creates faith in the hearts of many people. We can see it too. There is not an age in history when the church didn't look like it was done for. The threats to Jesus and his Word are still many. But still the power of the gospel creates and preserves many in the Christian faith.

Mark 9

Read Mark 9:2-4

The Transfiguration

- Why did Jesus share with Peter, James, and John this mountaintop experience? Jesus had just spoken to his disciples about his coming suffering and death and about the cross they too would carry. The disciples needed some dramatic evidence that Jesus was indeed their exalted Lord and that the end of the story would be that one day they too would share in that glory.
- How does Jesus share this mountaintop experience with us? He takes us aside in his Word and has us center our attention on his coming glory. There will be times when we too need to receive this deposit for our souls as we carry our crosses for Jesus.
- Describe Jesus' transfiguration. The glory hidden within Jesus' human nature burst forth with the splendor of the noonday sun. His clothes radiate with a dazzling white light. Peter would never forget it (2 Peter 1:16-18) and neither would John who would experience it again many years later (Revelation 1). White is the color of holiness and purity and Jesus' radiance was whiter than white.
- When did Jesus possess all the majesty and power and glory of the transfiguration? He always possessed it but he hid it so that he might carry the cross for our salvation. Remember this mountaintop experience whenever you find yourself in days of darkness and despair. At such times we need to lift our eyes and focus our attention on Jesus. His glory will never end and one day we will share in it.

- Why did Elijah and Moses also appear at this time? Moses was the great prophet of the law Jesus came to fulfill. Elijah was the great prophet and preacher of repentance. Both had already suffered much for Jesus. Both were already in heaven and now come to talk with Jesus about his coming passion (Luke 9:28-30). Any talk of heavenly bliss apart from Jesus and his cross is just not possible.

Read Mark 9:5-7

- Comment on Peter's response to this vision of heavenly glory. This entire event takes place to cheer and encourage Jesus' disciples. But Peter misses the point and wants this glorious experience to never end. Yes, how good it would be to be rid of all future anguish and trouble. But build some shelters? Peter still doesn't understand the focus of Jesus to carry out the work of our redemption. Peter still has in mind only the things of men and not of God.

- How does God the Father refocus the disciples' attention on Jesus? From the cloud he proclaims Jesus the Son whom he loved and calls upon the disciples to listen to him. Listen to Jesus. He is God not hidden in a cloud. He is God's Son sent into this world to suffer those horrible things we deserve because of our sin and guilt. What love the Father has for his Son. What love the Father has for us that he sends him back into the world to endure suffering and death upon the cross.

Read Mark 9:8-13

- Why did Jesus tell the disciples at this time not to tell anyone about this mountaintop experience? It would serve no useful purpose before his resurrection. First the cross; then the glory.

- How did the disciples try to sort things out? With each other they talk about what Jesus might have meant with his rising from the dead. With Jesus they ask about the coming of Elijah.

- How did Jesus answer their question about Elijah? Malachi 4 said that Elijah would come before the Messiah comes. Elijah's coming was to prepare the way for the Messiah. But the prophesy wasn't speaking about Elijah's appearance at Jesus' transfiguration but about the coming of John the Baptist.

- How did John the Baptist restore all things? John did restore all things, just the way God wanted, by preaching repentance and pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God. From a human perspective John's life ends with a shameful death and apparent failure. Yet from God's perspective he restored the pure preaching of God's Word with many believing the message and being baptized. Their hearts were now ready for Jesus and his kingdom. When we listen to Jesus and trust his Word, Jesus triumphs and the things of God finally show that victory perfectly, eternally, in the hour of our entry into heaven.

Read Mark 9:14-19

Jesus Heals a Boy With a Demon

- Why could the disciples not drive this demon out? There is no time for further quiet and peaceful instruction. The enemy is always there to battle, especially the enemy within. The devil wants to humiliate the disciples and Jesus through them. Experts in the law were arguing with them. (So where's your power now? All dried up?) The disciples have no answer.

- What tragic agenda does the father lay before Jesus? A demon had seized his boy and throws him down. He foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. Matthew and

Luke add that the demon had also rendered the boy speechless and powerless to help himself in any way. He had brought his boy to the disciples but they were unable to help him.

- Contrast the devil's activity and Jesus' Word and work? The devil promises pleasure but brings nothing but misery. He plunders and destroys. Jesus came to seek and to save and he was always concerned about each of us as individuals.

- To whom is Jesus addressing his rebuke as an unbelieving generation? All who were there listening, including his disciples. They couldn't heal the boy because they too were unbelieving. They gave up on Jesus' promise to enable them to cast out demons. Unbelief with respect to any part of Jesus' Word earns Jesus' sharp rebuke. Let all who would give up on Jesus take warning. Note Jesus' frustration with his disciples, but note also that Jesus doesn't give up on them. For the present he stays.

Read Mark 9:20-27

- How does Jesus respond when the devil launches another violent attack? His heart goes out to the boy's misery and also to the father's misery.

- What does the father's words, If you can... tell us about him? The father feels helpless in this situation and the condition of his soul is near to despair.

- How does Jesus meet the needs of the father? He gently leads him to recognize and acknowledge the deep need of his own soul. Jesus gives this man the opportunity to express exactly what is on his mind. First Jesus listens; he doesn't rush to supply a need not yet fully recognized or understood.

- Consider Jesus' words, All things are possible for the one who believes. Many love to rip these words out of context. The passage becomes the mantra for phony faith healers and prosperity preachers. They often contradict what the Bible often and clearly teaches. Jesus had given to the disciples the promise of a cross. Many of God's saints have had to endure many struggles. They were not immune from sickness, loss, and death. Even worse, these false prophets often lead others to unbelieving despair, as they conclude that because they didn't get the healing or the end of their problems they must not be believing Christians. Jesus' all things refer to all those things which are the proper object of faith.

- What was the proper object of the father's faith to be? The proper object of the father's faith was to put his trust in Jesus. But Jesus' willingness and ability to help did not depend on the father's merit or worthiness. Jesus even had healed people who didn't even know who he was. Yes, the man's faith in Jesus was storm-tossed and on the brink of becoming unbelieving despair. That's what Jesus wanted this man to recognize.

- Are all things possible for those who believe? Yes, all things that God has promised in his Word - that God loves us, that Jesus died for us, that God wants to forgive us and take us to heaven, that God ultimately will work all things for our eternal good. We receive these impossibles by faith in the promises of the gospel.

- Review what faith is. It is not a mindless feeling or emotion. It is often described by three words: knowledge, assent, and confidence. Our knowledge comes from God's unerring Word. We assent that God's Word is reliable and true. Our confidence is that Jesus will indeed keep his Word and promises in exactly the way that is best for us.

- Did the father have such faith? The father recognized the struggle going on in his soul. His anguished cry in his suffering pleaded with Jesus to help him overcome his unbelief. How

reluctant people often are to approach God in prayer in the darkest hours of life. Thus also our prayer: Lord, have mercy on us.

- How does Jesus answer the father's prayer? Jesus had compassion on him and drove the demon out of his son. Jesus' word sends the devil packing. And notice Jesus' gentleness as he pays attention to the boy's smallest need. He takes the boy by the hand and raises him up. How kind! How comforting to us in every time of need. To know that Jesus is at hand and will also give to us his loving and compassionate attention.

Read Mark 9:28-29

- What question do the disciples ask Jesus in private? They still want to know why they were not able to drive the demon out themselves.

- Are some demons more powerful than others? Yes. The disciples could have driven out this demon as Jesus had commanded them to do. But they needed to spend some special time in prayer, focusing on Jesus' promise to them. So also our struggle against the devil and the world and our own sinful flesh needs to be daily renewed, especially when our struggle seems doomed to failure. Again and again we need to be back to listening to Jesus. (Many ancient manuscripts omit the reference to fasting. Fasting in this case for the disciples would not have been possible.)

Read Mark 9:30-32

Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection Again

- How does Jesus continue to seek to prepare his disciples for what was about to happen to him? Jesus continued to teach them and to speak to them about his coming death and resurrection over and over again.

- What was the disciples' response? Mark tells us that they just didn't get it and were afraid to ask Jesus what it all meant.

- How is Jesus' patience one of his most beautiful attributes? How often we need Jesus to also be patient with us. How foolish we often are. How often we stumble and fall.

- Note the sharp contrast between Jesus and us. Jesus chooses the cross and wills it to happen. We want only the good life and do everything possible to achieve it with a minimum of effort, pain, or suffering. What a roller coaster of ups and downs happens in our lives. Each heavy cross reminds us of past rescues and prepares us for the next time of testing.

Read Mark 9:33-35

Who is the Greatest?

- What question does Jesus ask his disciples? This is Jesus' last visit to his home in Capernaum. His mind is set on the work of our redemption. The disciples' mind is set thinking only of themselves. They still had the notion that Jesus was about to set up a mighty earthly kingdom and they wanted to know where in this kingdom they would rank. They didn't think anyone was more special than themselves. Everyone wants to be the boss. Everyone wants people to yield to their opinions. Their argument about their greatness will begin all over again in the upper room on Maundy Thursday.

- Who does Jesus say is first in his kingdom? Those who act as the servants of all. A servant or slave (Matthew) has no right to ask the question: When is it my turn to be served.

This is what it means to take up ones cross for Jesus, to lose even my own life in service to any and all.

- How does Jesus here use the law in both its first and third use? He showed the disciples their sinfulness and their great need for Jesus' saving work. He also revealed his expressed will of the kind of life God wants his people to live. It's all about noticing the least and the lowly, especially those who are passed by and run over by everyone else. A life of service happens out of joyful gratitude that wants to serve just because it will please Jesus.

Read Mark 9:36-37

- What special blessing does Jesus give to parents and to all who serve children? The Lord entrusts children to their parents. Taking care of their children should come naturally. Taking care of children in Jesus' name is expressing love for Jesus and for our heavenly Father. What great honor Jesus gives to such servants.

- How does Jesus beautifully demonstrate his love for children? He took a child into his arms. That little child could do nothing to repay Jesus but that also exactly defines Jesus' kindness to us.

- When did Jesus warmly pick you up in his arms and bless you? Remember your baptism! Parents, sponsors, and pastor are temporary stand-ins for Jesus.

Read Mark 9:38-41

Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us

- How does Jesus feel about even the lowliest service done in faith? The disciples were offended by a man who was driving out demons in Jesus' name. He wasn't one of them. Jesus approved of that man and all that he was doing.

- Does that mean that Jesus approves of anyone who acts in his name, no matter what they teach, say, or do? Jesus himself was always faithful to God's revelation. Only those who remain in his Word are really his disciples (John 8:31). Jesus calls us to depart from all who would teach contrary to his Word.

- What does the Christ say to those who offer even the lowliest service done in faith? Christ, the Anointed One of God, our Prophet, Priest, and King, promises a reward for even offering to another a cup of water. That man driving out demons would also not be left without his reward. Note: Jesus is not here talking about ordinary humanitarian gestures, no matter how noble and valuable they may be to the world. Such works are not done in connection with Christ. Works that please Christ are always works of thanksgiving for redemption. Jesus loves and encourages such good works.

- Why can't we out-serve Jesus? He gives us forgiveness and eternal life and rules over everything in heaven and on earth for our benefit.

- What is the reward Jesus promises those who render service to others in his name? It boggles our mind that every little thing we do for Jesus is remembered and Jesus will find a way to bless and reward us. This promise of Jesus will find its final fulfillment on judgment day (Matthew 25:37-41). Jesus doesn't spell out the reward. He leaves us to trust his promise.

Read Mark 9:42-48

Do Not Cause Little Believers to Fall into Sin

- How noteworthy to Jesus is our service to a little child? Good done to a child is especially noteworthy to Jesus. Bringing a child to faith and nurturing that faith is one of the greatest works for Jesus. But the opposite is also true. To lead a little child away from Jesus will bring Jesus' sharpest condemnation. A millstone around the neck assures one of an absolute and horrible death. How easy it is to lead a little child to Jesus but also how easy it is to lead that child away from Jesus with both false teaching and sinful examples. The applications of Jesus' warning are endless for parents, pastors, and teachers.

- Does Jesus want us literally to cut off our hands and to pluck out our eyes when we fall into sin? To fall into a sin that causes us to deny our Savior and his saving work will bring us into the endless torments of hell. Jesus with repeated powerful emphasis wants us to know how great this danger is. Jesus wants us never to think lightly of sin or imagine that God thinks lightly of sin too. Jesus is not sanctioning self-mutilation. Yes, losing parts of one's body as the entrance price to heaven would be a small price to pay. But it isn't the parts of the body that lead us into sin but the sinful nature which uses the parts of the body in sinning. The problem and source of all sin is in our very nature. How these verses shatter and crush our pride which makes us think that we can make ourselves good enough to get into heaven. This is impossible, unless our entrance into heaven is God's free gift, unless Jesus washes us clean with his blood shed for us on Calvary. With this severe and bitter preaching of the law Jesus drives us to the sweetest teaching of the gospel.

- Does hell actually exist? Hell or Gehenna was the place by the south wall of Jerusalem where children were sacrificed into the fiery arms of the god Moloch. King Josiah considered this place such an abomination that he turned it into the city dump where the fires never went out. So also the pain of hell will never be extinguished. The suffering of the damned has no end. Jesus pictures hell as a place where the body is forever burned and the worm, the eternal anguish of the soul, never ends. Hell does exist and every time we think of it we should shudder.

- What would you say to someone who says that a God of love could never send someone to hell? They are flatly contradicting Jesus. It was love beyond compare that God sent Jesus into this world to save us. It was love beyond imagination that prompted Jesus to suffer the torments of hell on the cross to rescue even the arrogant ones who had nailed him there. It was love that prompted the Holy Spirit to guard and preserve the church of Jesus Christ so that his saving word might continue to be proclaimed. For those who reject God's love, hell will be well deserved. This is the second use of God's law, warning us to beware of all who would ensnare us with false teaching and lead us to share in their self-inflicted fate.

Read Mark 9:49-50

- What does it mean that everyone will be salted with fire? God's Word salts us with fire. The salt of the law stings and burns the sinful flesh. The law forbids what the flesh wants and urges us to a selflessness that the flesh abhors. The law makes our sinful flesh angry and even causes us to covet the sin that is forbidden. But how good this fire is when it drives us to the salt of the gospel which creates within us faith in spite of the opposition of the sinful nature. The salt of the gospel preserves our faith and purifies us with its message of full and free forgiveness.

- To what is Jesus encouraging us when he tells us to have salt in ourselves? He is encouraging us to daily repentance and to daily struggle against sin. There is no substitute for the salt of the law and the salt of the gospel. Only as we continue to be salted by Christ can we

have peace with God and with one another. Christianity is not a walk in the park but a commitment altogether different from our nature, a commitment to Jesus and his Word.

Mark 10

Read Mark 10:1-9

Marriage and Divorce

- When Jesus is asked about marriage and divorce, does he dumb down his answer? No, he reveals the truth even when it conflicts with popular opinion. Ultimately, it isn't the truth of God's Word that causes conflict but the teaching of those who reject God's truth.

- What argument did the Jewish rabbis have about marriage and divorce? Some taught that Deuteronomy 24:1 (civil law) gave the husband the right to divorce his wife for any and every reason. They ask Jesus to give his opinion in order to trap him. No matter what you say about marriage and divorce you are going to upset someone.

- What are the three kinds of law God gave his Old Testament people through Moses? Civil, ceremonial, and moral. Only the moral law is binding on us today. Why?

- What distinction does Jesus make about the difference between civil law and moral law? The civil law permitted divorce because of the people's hard hearts. It prevented the disorderly abandonment of a spouse and children. It restrained at least to some extent the behavior of those with hard hearts.

- When did God make clear his intention for marriage? In its institution in Genesis 2:18-24, before the fall into sin, God connects the core of marriage to self-denial and loving service. This begins with Adam. God revealed to Adam his need for marriage before the creation of Eve. God always wanted Adam to see in his spouse a special gift from God. The two become one flesh, united in a friendship and union that was only to end at the time of death. The Apostle Paul furthers our understanding of marriage so beautifully in Ephesians 5:22-33 where husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

- What is God's moral will for those who have been joined together in marriage? It is God's will that this union not be separated. How many like the Pharisees even try to use God's Word to find a loophole escape route for marriage. God wants husbands to love their wives and wives to love and submit to their husbands, each carrying out their high calling whether their spouses do so or not. So much of the ruin and chaos in this world begins in the home, in the collapse of God's blueprint for marriage.

ÿ- Apply God's first use of the law and his third use of the law to marriage. That our marriages never perfectly mirror the union between Christ and his church is obvious. The first use of God's law like a mirror will show us our sins. The third use of God's law will guide us as we strive out of love for Christ to follow God's will for marriage. We always remember that marriage is not just two people living together. It is two people living together with God leading and guiding the way.

Read Mark 10:10-12

- What further teaching about marriage and divorce does Jesus give his disciples privately? Those who divorce their spouses and marry another commit adultery. As great as the blessings God wants to pour out upon marriage, so great is the displeasure of its Creator over its disruption. Remember that so great a crime was adultery in the Old Testament civil law (Leviticus 20:10) that it deserved the death penalty. Those who deliberately and without repentance commit this sin (or any sin) will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- What else does God say in his Word about this important issue of marriage and divorce? An exception to this teaching about marriage and divorce occurs if a spouse breaks the marriage bond by committing adultery (Matthew 5:32 and 19:9). The desertion of a spouse also breaks the binding consent to be married and thus breaks the marriage bond (1 Corinthians 7:15). Jesus' concern here is not with the legal process involved with divorce but with the hardness of the heart that disrupts marriage in the first place.
- What two extremes will we want to be careful to avoid when talking about marriage, divorce, and remarriage? Read Professor Deutschlander's three comments on pages 318 and 319 of *Your Kingdom Come*.

Read Mark 10:13-16

Jesus Loves Little Children

- What is the most blessed fruit of marriage? Children. Who is more damaged by marriages that end in divorce than children? What would Jesus say about cross-bearing and self-denial when it comes to your children? Serve your children out of love for Jesus. Notice again how important are those who are little to Jesus. Anything that gets in the way of Jesus blessing little children arouses Jesus' anger as little else can.
- What does Jesus mean when he says that the kingdom of God belongs to little children? Remember that the kingdom of God by definition is God's gracious rule in the heart by means of his Word. Read three reasons Jesus is so eager that children be brought to him from *Your Kingdom Come*, page 321.
- What two common errors are disposed of by Jesus' words that his kingdom belongs to such as these and like a little child? The first error is the idea that it is not possible for children to have faith because they cannot express their faith. Jesus assures us here that they can believe. We leave the how up to God and thank God for baptism. The second error is the thought that only as a child can one receive the kingdom of God. Yes, children readily believe what parents and others tell them without raising all kinds of objections. But many others have come to faith as adults. What the faith of little children and the faith of a believing adult have in common is the kingdom of God.
- What blessing did Jesus give to the little children he took into his arms? We don't know but whatever Jesus said would have made a difference. God never blesses with just empty words. His words of blessing are always powerful and effective. Note the beautiful witness children so often give that the kingdom of God is in their hearts.

Read Mark 10:17-22

The Rich Young Ruler

- What did this man's running up to Jesus and calling him a good teacher tell us about the man? He thought Jesus was unique among teachers and could share with him the secret to eternal life. He did not grasp that Jesus is God. He had a nagging sense that he still lacked whatever was needed for him to be saved. But he is nevertheless confident in his ability to do it.
- Does Jesus answer his question with law or gospel? Jesus answered him with the law because the man needed to recognize the truth about his own sinfulness.
- Why does Jesus focus the man's attention on the word good? This young man needed to rethink who Jesus is. If Jesus is really good, he is God. And if only God is truly good, then God cannot accept or be pleased with someone who was less than good.

- When Jesus told the young man to keep the commandments, what was his answer? I have kept all these since I was a child. Mark takes special note that Jesus truly loved this young man who was genuinely eager to do what was God-pleasing. That is why Jesus applied more law to drive him to a proper despair about his own self-righteousness.
- What one thing was this man missing? The man was wealthy and he loved his money more than he loved God. Jesus' words devastated him and showed him how wicked and perverted his heart truly was.
- Could this young man have traded in his love of money for the treasures of heaven? No, he was powerless to change his sinful nature. The tragedy is that he went away from Jesus without confessing his sorrow and his sin. No matter how much Jesus loved him, Jesus would not force himself and his kingdom upon him.
- When do we need to give Jesus' dealings with this young man special attention? Any time we are feeling self-righteous, when we are satisfied that our love and faith is already about as perfect or close to it as it can be, when we imagine that our level of sanctification is at least higher than those around us. For each of us there will always be the one thing and maybe even the more than one thing that we would have a hard time giving up for God.
- If Jesus spoke the same words to us as he spoke to that young man, how would we react? Do we really know how we might have responded to Jesus' command? But this we can know, whatever test Jesus sets before us has the purpose of driving out our own self-righteousness and cause us to long ever more for the gospel. The evidence of God's grace is that he will not test us beyond our ability to endure (1 Corinthians 10:12,13). May the gospel of our Savior always mean more to us than life itself. And should we find ourselves struggling with letting go of that one thing, may our cry be, Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. And then we struggle on.

Read Mark 10:23-27

- Why were the disciples amazed at Jesus' words? Jesus says that those with material wealth have an especially difficult time entering heaven. How easily riches and self-righteousness can go together. How often the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. Though most of the disciples were not themselves rich, most people admired those who were rich. Using the first use of the law Jesus was now showing his disciples their own sins and their own desperate need for a forgiving Savior.
- Who then can be saved? In ourselves, no one. We are all too devoted to wealth or to a whole host of other things. Salvation is only possible when God gives it as a gift. By the power of his gospel message of forgiveness God creates the faith that trust him and his message of good news. Only the gospel can lift us from the crushing burden of despair. In the gospel of Jesus Christ we have the one thing needful.

Read Mark 10:28-31

- Did Peter correctly understand what Jesus was saying? No. Peter had a point when he said that he and the other disciples had left much to follow Jesus. But in his own self-righteousness all Peter can think about is what his sacrifice should earn him.
- How does Jesus answer Peter? Here is Jesus' perfect answer. Yes, those who suffer loss for Jesus will receive a hundred times as much in heaven. We can never out-give God. Yet this full and final gift of God will still be undeserved and beyond any loss we may have endured for

Jesus. For now, we trust Jesus' word. We live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Given our fallen nature, we always need to beware loving the gifts more than the Giver. For this reason God also in this world gives us times of testing and persecution.

- What encouragement is Jesus giving us with his words. Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first? Don't take the promises of God for granted for those who do can so easily fall into self-righteousness. Consider yourself to be last in the kingdom of God and gratefully focus on your service to Jesus and to others. Above all, cling to God's gospel promises and out of love for Christ be ready and willing to abandon everything for Jesus, if need be.

Read Mark 10:32-34

Again Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection

- Why were Jesus' disciples and others amazed and afraid? Jesus literally was about to leave everything. And Jesus marched ahead determined to endure each agonizing detail.

- At what does Jesus want us to Look? That word Look or Behold served as a kind of stop sign in the Bible. It occurs more than a thousand times in the Old Testament and almost three hundred times in the New Testament. Almost always it introduces something that should give us pause, something that should shock or surprise us. So often we have heard this word spoken that we just pass it by quickly. So, stop and don't be in such a rush to hurry on.

- How does Jesus deal with the anxiety of the disciples? He confirms his earlier prophecies. It is not possible for us to exaggerate the horror of Jesus' words. Who can imagine it? The Creator and Lord of life will be tortured and killed by mortals in Jerusalem. Both the leaders in church and state will carry out this act of injustice. And none of the thousands Jesus helped and healed and fed would lift a hand to save him. Not one word would be spoken in his defense. And Jesus would do it all alone. How Jesus must love us!

- What will Jesus have at the end of his sacrificial gift to us? After three days he will rise again. As horrible as would be his suffering, so glorious would be his triumph.

Read Mark 10:35-40

- What unimaginable request did James and John (through their mother) now ask of Jesus? They want to sit at Jesus' right and left hands in his glory. After Jesus had just told them of his coming suffering and death, all they can think about is their own glory!

- How does Jesus in his great patience answer them? Not with a volley of words filled with contempt and disgust but with patience Jesus answers James and John. Jesus asks them if they were prepared to drink the cup of Jesus' suffering? There is to be no crown without the cross, no glory without suffering for Jesus first.

- How do James and John reply to Jesus' question? Without a moments pause they declare themselves to be ready for anything. Had they really paid attention to what Jesus had just told them?

- What promise did Jesus then make them? They would indeed drink the cup of Jesus' suffering. In due course that time came. James suffered martyrdom relatively early (Acts 12:1,2). John was left to suffer in his old age as an exile on the island of Patmos. But to sit at Jesus' right and left hand in glory was not now the proper question to ask. The Father already has arranged for honors and high honors in heaven. This is the Father's business, not ours.

Read Mark 10:41-45

- Were the other ten disciples better than James and John? No, they too think only of themselves and become angry with James and John.
- What characteristic marks those who would be considered great in Jesus' eyes? Their willingness to be servants, not those who were served. Jesus himself would show the way as he lays down his life as a ransom for many. What a struggle for our sinful flesh. As Luther was fond of saying, Everyone wants to be pope in his own little kingdom.

Read Mark 10:46-52

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

- Hear Professor Deutschlander's first two paragraphs on a textual problem, page 348 of *Your Kingdom Come*.
- What lesson can we learn from Bartimaeus, a blind beggar? He cries out to Jesus for help and he won't be silenced by those who tell him to shut up. He has nothing to offer Jesus - no merit, no money, no power, no influential friends. All he seeks from Jesus is mercy.
- The blind man addresses Jesus as Son of David. What does this tell us about him? This was the title all understood as belonging to the promised Messiah. How amazing that Bartimaeus had this faith when so many others who had seen Jesus' miracles didn't. Jesus had prevented others from using this exalted title for him but he will do nothing to prevent Bartimaeus' passion.
- Describe the wonderful scene that follows. Jesus calls him, the crowd tells him to cheer up and get up, The man throws off his outer garment, jumps up, and goes to Jesus. At Jesus' encouragement he calls Jesus' Rabboni (my teacher, my master) and asks for his sight to be restored. Jesus rewards his faith by restoring his sight immediately. (Other evangelists tell us that Jesus touched his eyes in this miracle.) Note again how Jesus praises the faith that he himself has created by his Word effective in us. What an encouragement to us to cling to Jesus and his saving Word.
- What did Bartimaeus do that no other recipient of Jesus' help ever did? He followed Jesus to Jerusalem. Luke adds that he continually praised and thanked God and others joined him in that praise. And so the progression to the cross continues.

Mark 11

Read Mark 11:1-11

Jesus Triumphant Entry Into Jerusalem

- How does Jesus prepare for his entry into Jerusalem? He sends two disciples to get a colt from the village. The healing of Bartimaeus and the raising of Lazarus had spread to those on the road to Jerusalem. Jesus is now only a mile or two from the city and on the way. The city was normally a powder keg during the Passover celebration when the hope heated up that the Messiah would come to drive out the Romans. Both Pilate and Herod were there to keep an eye on the crowds, with maximum violence if needed. How simply Mark records how that day began.
- How lowly on this special day does Jesus enter Jerusalem as our Savior-King? He rides in on a lowly colt with the mother donkey walking beside it. The colt is borrowed. Jesus needs it. Note Jesus' omniscience that all that was necessary would be there so that he could fulfill the prophesy of Zechariah (9:9-12).

- How did the people respond to Jesus as he entered Jerusalem? The people poured out to welcome Jesus. They mix their clothing with branches cut down to line the road for Jesus. The Palm Sunday welcome was glorious with the people singing Jesus' praises. The song of welcome is from the Hallel, the series of Psalms (113-118) that were sung by the pilgrims at Passover. Hosanna can mean both all hail and bring salvation. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, with all the authority of the Lord and with the revelation of himself as Savior. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David, which is exactly what many expected the promised Messiah to establish. Indeed, Jesus is the King who has come to establish the kingdom of God. Hosanna in the highest! As such let us welcome him.

- How many of that crowd really recognized the significance of this day with its mixture of glory and lowliness? Jesus' entry is not in violence but in lowliness and humility. In lowly pomp he rides into Jerusalem to die. All the events of Holy Week were known to Jesus before they happened and Jesus controlled them from beginning to end. Few if any in that crowd recognized the significance of that day but everything that was to happen was just as the Scriptures had prophesied.

Read Mark 11:12-14

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree

- Why does Jesus curse a fig tree? What a strange incident. Early Monday morning Jesus and his disciples leave Bethany and set out for Jerusalem. Jesus is hungry and sees a fig tree in leaf in the distance. Fig trees bear fruit first, then leaves. So Jesus expects to find fruit. (Jesus' hunger and not knowing there was no fruit on the tree underscores the truth of Jesus' human nature and the state of his humiliation. Jesus until the day of his resurrection subjected himself to the normal limitations of a human being.) Jesus will use his almighty power in respect to this tree. Jesus curses the tree so that it would never bear fruit again.

- Does Jesus cursing a fig tree surprise and maybe even shock you? Was this from Jesus a fit of rage? No, for Jesus in his entire life will never sin. Why didn't Jesus fill the tree with fruit to satisfy his hunger? Jesus never used his miracles for his own benefit and blessing. So why use his powers to destroy that fruitless tree?

- What principle is Jesus applying in his cursing this fig tree? This is the general principle: What does not fulfill the purpose for which it was made must in due course perish. Jesus is making this spiritual point with this event from nature. Jesus was about to enter upon the way of the cross to redeem and save us. However, while Jesus saved us from sin, he didn't save us so that we might sin. Remember what Jesus said about good trees. If people call themselves Christians but by their own choice bear no good fruit, they will, if they stay that way, be cut down and perish eternally.

Read Mark 11:15-19

Jesus Cleanses His Father's House

- What was the purpose of the temple? It was to be a house of prayer for all nations. It was to be a place where God and man could meet one another. It was a place where God wanted people to be able to learn God's gracious will for them, the wonders of the law and the life-giving beauty of the gospel.

- How did God at the temple show the seriousness of his law? The sacrifices clearly proclaimed that the wages of sin is death. The eternal consequences of sin are death and damnation.
- How did God at the temple show the glory of the gospel? The blood of the animals pointed ahead to the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, which would be shed for the sins of the world. The high point of this message was proclaimed on the Day of Atonement. And when those bringing the sacrifice ate part of this sacrifice in the temple precincts, it became a meal in which God was the host and the sacrificer was his guest. Our celebration of the sacrament is a perfect reflection and fulfillment of that same picture.
- What about those people (women and gentiles) who could not be physically present with these sacrifices? They could still hear God's promises there. God's house was still intended to be a blessing for all nations. To accommodate the gentile converts there was a special outer court where they could hear God's Word and at least see from a distance the offered sacrifices. How special was that courtyard! It was to this courtyard that Jesus comes the Monday of Holy Week.
- What does Jesus find in this temple area? Not gentiles listening to God's Word taught by faithful priests and teachers of the law. This huge outer court had been turned into a marketplace. All that could be heard was the bleating and bellowing of animals, the sound of birds, and the cries of the money changers. All this for the profit of the merchants and money changers and priestly establishment who permitted them to be there.
- What was the response of the religious leaders when Jesus began to drive out the offenders and to cleanse the temple? They want to kill Jesus. But they are afraid of the people. But they were not afraid of God. These priests and experts in the law were the theologians and pastors of the people. More than anyone else they should have been struck with the rightness of Jesus' actions. But just the opposite was the case. At the beginning of his three-year ministry and again now Jesus revealed that the temple had ceased to serve its divinely intended purpose and was used instead for the defense of sin. Let us take heed. Jesus' patience is great and his forbearance is long but destruction awaits all who oppose and hate him.
- Compare the purpose of the temple with the purpose of the church today. The church is God's house where God's Word is to be proclaimed in its truth and purity and people are to be blessed with a proper use of law and gospel. It is more than a social club for like-minded friends and family. This should inspire in us a life of purity and a joyful witness to the truth of God's Word, as those who individually are saints and temples in whom God lives.

Read Mark 11:20-24

- How does Tuesday of holy week again begin with the fig tree? The disciples cannot help but notice and comment on the fig tree that Jesus had cursed and which had withered at once.
- Does Jesus' response to Peter's comment surprise you? The fig tree had been cursed because it failed to serve its divinely intended purpose. What happened to the fig tree wasn't so important, but the lesson for Peter and the other disciples was important. If they were surprised at the tree, they would be even more surprised at the deeds produced by Jesus' disciples. In themselves the disciples were absolutely powerless. But with the power of Jesus they would do the impossible that God commanded of them. If God commanded it, they would even be able to move a mountain into the sea. God didn't command this action but an even greater one. Through the preaching and teaching of the apostles the name of Jesus would go out into the

world and the impossible happened. The kingdom of Jesus Christ has come to us, one at a time, and the blessings of God's Word and sacraments has become for us the most common of wonders.

- How does Jesus encourage us in our prayer life? Jesus isn't telling us that we can pray for whatever we want and that we will get it if we just believe. This is the message of so-called faith healers. The proper content of our faith is not our feelings or our will or our wishes but our trust in God's Word that God means everything he says. This is the proper sequence. Jesus commands the impossible, such as that we believe that he is our Savior. Already we have received that or we would not be praying in the first place. Now all the promises of the gospel are also ours. We already have what we have prayed for. So why pray? Because Jesus said we should and because Jesus delights to hear our prayers. His promise about the mountain and the sea assures us that Jesus will keep his every promise to us and so we can pray without doubt.

Read Mark 11:25-26

- What other command does Jesus give us concerning our prayer life? Jesus calls us to forgive anyone who sins against us and warns that God the Father won't forgive us if we don't forgive others. Is Jesus not also asking us here to do the impossible? Forgiving others is not optional. It is why in the Lord's Prayer we ask God to forgive us as we forgive others. It is the gospel alone, God's promise of forgiveness in Jesus, which will give us the power and ability also to forgive others. Yes, on my best day I still remain a sinner. This fills me with anguish and disgust. The mountains of my sin and guilt are great. How often my self-righteous heart is not willing to forgive others. Yet God forgives my sins every moment of every day. This is not an excuse for sinning. It is just the recognition of the way we are and a plea not to despair of God's forgiveness to us in Jesus.

- Does God anywhere in the Bible condone sin and tolerate evil? No, Christians are always called by God to love that which is good and to leave behind that which is evil. And all our efforts to do just that, imperfect as they are, are seen by God. How this should further our efforts, spurred on by God's forgiveness, to do so.

Read Mark 11:27-33

Jesus' Authority Is Questioned

- What question do the highest members of the Jewish high court ask Jesus? They want a formal declaration from him about his authority to do these things. What things? He had entered Jerusalem in the manner prophesied about the Old Testament Messiah. He healed the sick. He cleansed the temple. For three years Jesus had shown himself to be the Son of God. His authority is that of the King who comes to proclaim his kingdom. That should have been obvious to those important spiritual leaders who now challenge Jesus.

- How does Jesus answer their question with a question of his own? Whatever answer Jesus would have given to their question would have been used against Jesus. If he said his authority was from God, they would accuse him of blasphemy; if from men, they would have accused him of rebellion and stirring up the people. So Jesus asks them to answer whether they believed John the Baptist's ministry was from heaven or from men. No matter how these officials would have answered Jesus' question, their hypocrisy would have been revealed. Their refusal to answer Jesus' question does the same. A debate with these officials would have had no purpose and would have done no good.

Mark 12

Read Mark 12:1-12

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

- How does the parable that Mark records proclaim judgment on the Jewish authorities? Jesus never soft-peddled or compromised his Word. This parable is pointed and directed against the religious leaders. Jesus uses the imagery of the vineyard whose workers mistreat those the owner sent to them requesting his share of the produce. Finally they seize and kill his son. And Jesus tells them how the owner would respond, by killing them and giving the vineyard to someone else.

- What Scripture does Jesus use against them? Psalm 118:22-23. The Lord had made Jesus himself the cornerstone of God's house. In rejecting Jesus these leaders had rejected and turned against the Lord. All that remained for them was the final judgment from God.

Read Mark 12:13-17

Paying Taxes to Caesar

- What final attempt do the Jewish leaders make in their effort to entrap Jesus? Some of the Pharisees (the super religious people) get together with the Herodians (the super irreligious people) and pretend that they want Jesus to answer a question of common morality, should people pay taxes to Caesar. If Jesus would have agreed with the Pharisees and in any way declared his opposition to the payment of these taxes, he would have been charged with sedition. If Jesus would have agreed with the Herodians, those standing by would have loudly objected.

- How did Jesus give them the perfect answer to their question? Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. If you use the money of the emperor and empire, you can't object to paying the tax that supports the government. And what belongs to God? Everything we have, every breath we take, every moment of our lives.

Read Mark 12:18-27

The God of the Living

- What question do the Sadducees set before Jesus? The Sadducees were the super-refined, super-educated class of Jews. They cared little for the religion of the Bible. They much preferred the Greek philosophy to the teaching of the Bible. This included their rejection of a physical resurrection of the body. The Sadducees believed that only the soul was eternal. Many held that the souls were punished by being imprisoned in their human bodies. They wanted to escape back to pure spirit in the ether of the other world. So the Sadducees' question had the goal of making a physical resurrection look silly. Seven brothers all have the same wife and no children. Whose wife would she be in the resurrection? This was their effort to make one part of the Bible to contradict a different portion of the Bible.

- In what two ways does Jesus reveal how mistaken the Sadducees were in their knowledge of Scripture? First, Jesus gives the correct answer about the power of God to raise the dead and proclaims that there is no marriage in heaven. Jesus has no need to speculate either about the Scriptures or the power of God. He knows. Other portions of the Bible describe heaven but most of those descriptions tell us what heaven will not be like - no sickness or pain or dying or sin. Heaven's great blessing is summed up in this, Jesus will come and take us to be

with him. Second, Jesus chooses Exodus 3:6 as his proof passage that there is life after death. God proclaims himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am (present tense) their God even now. Yes, Jesus believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. He proves the doctrine of the resurrection with just that one word. But weren't their bodies still in the grave? Exactly! For God to be, not just have been, their God, their body and soul must be rejoined. What about the state of the soul between death and the resurrection? This question is not proper as God has not chosen to provide an answer in his Word. Jesus not only declares that the Sadducees were mistaken. They were badly mistaken. Tragically theirs would be a resurrection to eternal damnation.

Read Mark 12:28-34

Love God and Your Neighbor

- What question does one of the experts in the law (scribes) ask Jesus? Which commandment is the greatest of all? The rabbinical law was complicated. The scribes and Pharisees had added to God's law 613 extra laws. They believed that keeping them merited for them God's special blessing. Endlessly they debated and tried to rank these laws or traditions of the elders which were bound at times to be in conflict with each other. It was a real maze that common people had no hope of penetrating.

- How does Jesus answer this question? With verses 29-30 Jesus cuts through the clutter and cites Deuteronomy 6:4. So important, so beautiful was this verse that it was to be repeated once in the morning and once in the evening. This was the Jewish national anthem and now it is ours too.

- What word for love does God use in listing for us the two tables of his law? It is agape love, a love that is more than just emotion. It is a love that is vigorous and active. This is the kind of love God gave to his Old Testament people and now also gives to us. Because of God's love we owe him everything, all our thanks, our words, our praise and adoration, all our heart and all our soul (our innermost being) and all our mind and all our strength. And then we are to reflect that same agape love to our neighbor. Loving service to God is to be shown by our loving service to our neighbor.

- What is our most basic problem with God's law? It is impossible for us to keep it even for a moment. This is the truth that Jesus wants to lead this expert in the law to see.

- How does this expert in the law respond to Jesus' answer? As this expert hears Jesus' answer, it's as if a bright light goes on in his mind. He recognizes that Jesus is absolutely correct in what he said. But there is no confession of faith in Jesus as his Savior. And so this young man cannot even begin in any way to keep God's law.

- What did Jesus mean when he said that this expert in the law was not far from the kingdom of God? He was so close to the kingdom of God but he was not yet there. He recognized that Jesus spoke the truth. But he lacked the only possible proper response to that truth. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Good intentions are not enough. Our best efforts are not enough. God's law demands perfect love for God and man. The expert does not grasp his absolute and desperate need for God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. And so, though he was close, he yet was standing outside the kingdom of God. Tragically neither this man nor anyone else stepped forward to ask Jesus any more questions.

Read Mark 12:35-37

David's Son and David's Lord

- Before the scribes and Pharisees have a chance to leave, what question does Jesus ask them? Jesus' question is designed to batter down the strong gates of their unbelief. He wants them to ponder how David by the Holy Spirit could call his son, his descendant, his Lord. These scholars were very familiar with this passage from Psalm 110. In the first line of the Hebrew original there are two different words used for Lord. The first is God's personal name Yahweh and the other is the word Adonai, the name which was most commonly used for God as King, as the one who rules and fights for his people. Depending on the context Adonai could refer to either the Father or the Son. The Pharisees all agreed that this passage referred to the Messiah who would come from David's line. In the first line God is speaking to God. And God is being addressed as David's son. This Messiah would be far greater than what the scribes and Pharisees were expecting.

- What does the Lord say to my Lord? Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool under your feet. The warrior Son of God would battle and defeat all his enemies. Their defeat will not end in elimination. Their defeat would be just the beginning of their subjugation and their humiliation. The right hand of God was the position of power and authority. David's son with his human nature will be one person with the divine nature of God's Son that existed from all eternity.

- What was the only possible conclusion that can be drawn from this passage about Jesus? Jesus is identifying himself as the one who is both God's own Son as well as David's son. Anyone who opposes this Son is doomed to failure. With these words Jesus is holding out to his enemies another call to repentance. Jesus now leaves the temple area. We have no record of Jesus going there on Wednesday or Thursday of Holy Week.

Read Mark 12:38-40

Do Not Do What They Do

- Why does Jesus warn his disciples about the teaching of the experts in the law? They carried out their office with much show and did much to look good in the eyes of others. They were hypocrites and even used their office to devour widows' houses. Their harming of the poor and needy was visible proof of their unbelief and of the judgment which they one day would receive.

- Did Jesus judge and condemn? He certainly did and we should too. But what about Matthew 7:1 where Jesus tells us not to judge? There Jesus is talking about those who judge from a self-righteous mind set. While we cannot know what is in a person's heart, that heart can be made known by a person's public words and actions. Wicked behavior and false doctrine call for judgment and the rejection and avoidance of the guilty. To fail to do so leaves us and others open to their soul-destroying damage. The wickedness of these religious leaders would receive greater punishment than others.

Read Mark 12:41-44

- What seemingly unimportant incident does Mark next record? After the religious leaders leave, Jesus has a moment to people watch. Jesus watches as a poor widow puts two small bronze coins into the collection box (one of many chests with a trumpet-shaped top) used for the upkeep of the temple.

- What very important lesson does Jesus teach us in this incident? No person is more important to Jesus than the least of us. God sees our love for him that no one else may see or

understand. What a depth of faith and love for and trust in God was found in that poor widow. She put in everything that she had to live on. To her mind she couldn't do otherwise.

- Does Jesus watch us and what we put into the church collection plate too? Oh, yes. On Judgment Day Jesus will bring to light all those works which reflected our love for him, whether visible to others or not. May God help us grow in our joy in returning to God what he has first given to us, as best we can. One of the church fathers reading this text prayed, O God, I have nothing more than two pennies, namely, one body and one soul. Oh, that I might be able to offer them completely to you as is right and that you would graciously receive them. How blessed I would be in such an acceptance by you!

Mark 13

Read Mark 13:1-6

The Destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the World

- What did Jesus say when a disciple commented on the impressive stones that made up the temple? The temple was indeed a magnificent structure, one of the wonders of the world. Herod the Great had spent fortunes on it throughout his reign and the work on it had continued for the twenty years or so after his death. Jesus now prophesied the temple's destruction.

- What question then did Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask him privately? They wanted to know the signs that would announce when this destruction was to happen. Jesus lets the destruction of the temple and the end of the world be connected. The sign that would unite them was the rise of false prophets. Whether the end of the world comes soon or not, people need to be on their guard. Many false Christs would arise and deceive many. When the truth of God's Word is no longer loved and treasured, the end would come - both for the temple and for the world. And it is also Jesus' coming which ties these two events together.

Read Mark 13:7-13

- What else did Jesus prophesy would happen between his first and second coming? Jesus predicted the coming of wars and rumors of war, earthquakes, famines, persecution of Jesus' disciples. These would be like the beginning of birth pains, painful but necessary. First the gospel must be preached in all the world.

- Why does Jesus tell us this ahead of time? He doesn't want us to be taken by surprise or to be shaken in our faith. The world's fierce hostility to his gospel message should not surprise us. The things of this world are all fleeting and temporary. Only the gospel will endure forever. Therefore when the world shakes its fist at us, draw ever closer to Jesus through his Word. The kingdom of God will continue to advance in this world just as Jesus has prophesied.

- What special prophecy does Jesus give for the apostles? They would be arrested and handed over for trial. They were not to worry about what they would say. The Holy Spirit would speak through them. This remained true for all that the apostles would speak and write. How earnestly we should devote ourselves to listening to their words.

- Even to what extent should we expect the opposition to Christ and his Word to intensify? Those who confess faith in Jesus could even expect that their own families would be torn apart. They would be hated by everyone because of the name of Jesus. Only those who endured to the end would be saved. Death itself would release them from the anguish of their betrayal. An eternity worth of blessedness they would have in exchange. That we have not experienced this degree of opposition should not lull us into a false sense of security. There are other Christians in parts of our world who are even now facing such persecution.

Read Mark 13:14-23

- To what does “the abomination that causes desolation” refer? Jesus now turns his attention to the specific question he was asked about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The fulfillment of this prophesy would guarantee us that all the words Jesus spoke about the history of the world from Pentecost to the end of the world are true. Daniel’s prophesy about this abomination that causes desolation (Daniel 11:31 and 12:1) had already been fulfilled once during the time of the Maccabees (164 B.C.). The pagan ruler of the Seleucid Empire, Antiochus Epiphanes, was involved in a bloody civil war with major Jewish factions. He used this civil war as an excuse to tighten his control over Judea. He sent troops into Jerusalem to destroy the city. To make sure that everyone knew that he was in control, he had a statue of Zeus erected in the temple precincts. This was recognized as a fulfillment of Daniel’s prophesy. It was during these episodes that the Jewish Hanukkah history took place. Jesus now prophesies that a second abomination would take place with the shedding of blood in the temple. This abomination would be far worse than the first. In A.D.70 Titus laid siege to Jerusalem. The Zealot sect let Idumeans into the temple precincts and proceeded to slaughter 8,500 people there, while ridiculing everything the temple stood for. The historian Josephus gives a detailed account of these wars, the internal strife among the Jewish factions, their bloodshed and cruelty, and the ultimate destruction of the city and temple by Titus.

- Was this prophesy of Jesus remembered by the Christian living in the city? Yes, when the bloody war broke out in the temple, they fled and escaped its bloody aftermath. Yet note the anguish in Jesus’ heart for his people who had to flee and for those who were pregnant or nursing.

- If God knows all that will happen and his knowledge cannot be overturned, why does Jesus tell us to pray? God does take into account our prayers in his unalterable will! The prayers that Jesus encouraged were graciously answered. The destruction took place in spring and after many had fled. Jesus wants us to be encouraged in our prayer life and assures us that our prayers are effective and heard.

- How does Jesus tie the distress of those days with the distress at the end of the world? So great was God’s love for his fallen people that he did not totally destroy them. While the majority of people living at the end of the world would come under God’s wrath, God’s elect would be delivered and the time for the world’s end shortened. Read Daniel Deutschlander’s comment on page 436, the first full paragraph, of *Your Kingdom Come*.

- What warning does Jesus give us concerning the dark days that would accompany the end of the world? Jesus warns us to watch out for the false Christs and false prophets who would even perform signs and wonders to deceive the elect, if possible. Jesus has told us everything in advance so that we only listen to him. This is the antidote to the deceptions that try to drive all of us out of Jesus’ kingdom. Listen to the Word of the King!

Read Mark 13:24-31

- After the gospel has gone out into all the world, how will the distress of those last days end? Jesus’ description of his return is dramatic indeed. No longer will there be the slightest trace or hint of humiliation or of the cross. The sun, moon, and stars proclaim this world’s end. The Son of Man comes on clouds with great power and glory. All the dead arise and thousands of angels gather together the elect of God, the living and the dead. All these things will happen

virtually simultaneously. And the timelessness of eternity begins. Jesus' resurrection and ascension have won for us the guarantee that the glory of heaven will be ours at Jesus' return.

- Apply Jesus' illustration of the fig tree. Spring has come once again and summer is near. And the fig trees sprout leaves and promise fruit. What joy is felt when we see the summer again approaching. So also the gospel is proclaimed and faith in Jesus grows and fills our hearts with joy. Yes, there is persecution but the faith of the elect perseveres, as we look forward to the day the door opens for us to enter the Kingdom of God in heaven. And Jesus assures us that this time is near.

- What is the generation that will certainly not pass away until all that Jesus has prophesied happens? The generation of unbelievers doesn't change and continues on until Jesus returns. But don't get discouraged. The winter's icy blasts of painful persecution and of the rejection of the gospel will not stop Jesus from being faithful to his Word. Jesus' words will never pass away.

Read Mark 13:32-37

Watch! Be Alert!

- What is Jesus' perfect conclusion to his discourse on the end times? It is the call for us to watch and pray.

- On what day will Jesus return again? Jesus tells us that only the Father knows, not the angels, not even himself according to his human nature and in his state of humiliation.

- If we are not to be concerned about the day of Jesus' return, on what should the focus of our attention be? Our business is to focus on that which God has given to us in his Word. Then watch, be alert, pray, hear and keep his Word. There is nothing else that we need to do.

- What harm has come to the church when people tried to fix the date of Jesus' return? People were not willing to start anything of importance. After all, wasn't it all going to perish in a couple of years anyway? How hard it is to keep the focus of our attention on the Word. We become so distracted by the things of this life that we stop watching.

- What is the closing prayer in the Bible which we also can use on a daily basis? Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20).

- Finally, what does Jesus tell us about his second coming (verses 34-37)? It will happen at a time that no one expects. Our business is to keep watch, stay busy doing the Lord's work, and be ready for his return at any moment. Yes, enjoy the blessing of life that God gives you but don't let the things you enjoy in this life become the point and purpose of your life. Don't let the pleasures of life blunt your anticipation that Jesus is one day soon coming again.

Mark 14

Read Mark 14:1-9

The Plot to Kill Jesus and Mary Anoints Jesus

- Of what one thing did the chief priests and the experts in the law agree? These leaders of God's church despised each other and rarely missed an opportunity to snipe at and publicly insult each other. But on one thing they agreed. Jesus must die. Many who call themselves the Christian theologians of our day do the same. They agree with the wise of the unbelieving world and reject the word of Christ. Thus they reject the creation account, Jesus' virgin birth, his miracles, even his resurrection from the dead.

- What's the significance of all this happening at Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? This time commemorated God's deliverance of his people from their slavery in Egypt.

At Passover the blood of the lamb was shed to deliver them from the angel of death. Yeast was considered an impurity and so was taken out of the bread. It was banned from Jewish houses during the Passover celebration. Now in the middle of Tuesday night, two days before the Passover commemoration, the religious leaders of Israel plot the death of the Passover Lamb. It was all happening just as God prophesied and Jesus continued to remain in control of the how and of the when.

- What event does Mark now go back to that took place on the Saturday evening before Palm Sunday? Jesus is in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, when Mary came in with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. Mary seems to have understood better than the others what was about to happen to Jesus. Mary had been listening to what Jesus said about his coming suffering and death. We don't know how long she had planned to pour this perfume which was worth a whole year's wages over Jesus' feet. Many who witnessed this act thought it was way too costly and emotional.

- What was Jesus' verdict about Mary's action? Jesus read her heart and praised her expression of faith as wonderful and beautiful. The reward Jesus planned for her was greater than she could ever have imagined. Jesus praised her and announced that this act of love would be proclaimed in the whole world.

- What did Jesus have to say about Judas and the others who criticized her? Note how these critics cover up their own greed with expressions of concern for the poor. The gospel of John tells us that Judas the thief would have liked to sell that perfume and put the money in his own pocket. The word scold indicates the certain sarcastic arrogance with which they wanted to humiliate Mary. Mary didn't defend herself but Jesus defended her. Jesus puts her expensive gift into context. The poor spiritually and materially will always be there to be helped. But Jesus' coming death and burial presented a unique opportunity to show reverence for Jesus. Mary anoints Jesus just as if he were a king. How totally her heart was devoted to Jesus. Hers was a faith for us to imitate.

Read Mark 14:10-11

Judas Plans to Betray Jesus

- Note how Mark puts Judas in contrast with Mary. Judas' utter hypocrisy and ungrateful wickedness are the opposite of Mary's simple and humble devotion to Jesus. Judas went soon, maybe that very night, to offer his act of betrayal to the chief priests.

- Note the self-delusion of Judas in his betrayal of Jesus for money. Did Judas really believe that he could get away with this evil that he was planning? Does he just totally ignore the fact that there would be tragic consequences to what he was doing, for himself as well as for Jesus? Do you recognize how the devil tempts Judas with the love of money and then leads Judas down the road to total despair? First he leads Judas to minimize his sin and guilt and then to maximize his sin and guilt as he drives Judas to the act of suicide. Let us beware the devil's desire to do the same to us. Judas' fall didn't happen overnight. It took time. It took a little compromise here and another there. Judas' sins begin to pile up until finally repentance is distant and forgotten.

- What is mortal sin? It is sin that kills saving faith. It is sin committed deliberately, knowingly, usually planned out in advance and repeated at will. It is sin that is practiced and exercised. We need to remain constantly on guard for none of us can start thinking that our sins

don't matter and that we can commit them with reckless abandon. We need to remember that God always takes his Word seriously, whether we do so or not.

Read Mark 14:12-21

Jesus Celebrates the Passover

- How does Jesus continue to show that he is totally in control of all that is about happen? It is taken as a given that Jesus will celebrate the Passover. Indeed, Jesus knows about the large upper room that was already furnished and ready for him.

- Describe the Passover meal. It was marked with strict and detailed rules intended to bring to mind all that God had done in delivering his people from slavery in Egypt. The ritual eating was intermingled with the singing of Psalms 115-118 and 120-137.

- What shocking declaration does Jesus make as the ritual eating comes to an end? One who was eating with Jesus would betray him. This must have struck the disciples like a thunderbolt. Surely not I, each of them exclaim. But they realize that, if Jesus said it, this horrible thing was in fact possible.

- How is Jesus here offering to Judas immeasurable grace? Jesus is not looking for pity. He is issuing to Judas a gentle call to repentance. How Jesus longs for and seeks the soul of Judas.

- Was Judas predestined to do what he did? No, would not Jesus in Gethsemane calling Judas his friend then have been the height of hypocrisy? Judas set his path for himself through his own fault and choice. Yes, Scripture declared that one would betray Jesus but it is Judas who decides that he will be the one to do it. While God knows everything and uses the world's wicked intension for his own purposes, God has not predestined or willed anyone to damnation. Jesus loved all and sought the salvation of everyone. In spiritual things our free will is limited. We have a free will to reject the gospel but we have no corresponding free will to accept the gospel. Because we are born spiritually dead in sin, we have no power to make ourselves spiritually alive. Life, both physical and spiritual, is entirely the gift of God. The powerful tool God uses to create spiritual life within us is the gospel in Word and sacraments. How to square this circle of God's will and man's freedom is not our business.

Read Mark 14:22-25

The Lord's Supper

- What are Jesus' plain and clear words about the Lord's Supper? The bread is Jesus' body and the wine is Jesus' blood. Jesus' body and blood are truly present and received in this sacrament. How this can be is also God's business. What we eat is Jesus' business. Faith receives what God says and gives and promises with a trust and confidence formed by the Word itself.

- What do other churches teach about the Lord's Supper? They teach representation and transfiguration. (For those who wish for further information on these two teachings, see *Your Kingdom Come*, pp.467-470.)

- What is Jesus' teaching us with his words blood of the new testament? A testament is a type of contract. The law is a bilateral testament; the gospel is a unilateral covenant. That's what makes it new. Jesus promises and gives everything, and Jesus' powerful words of promise cause us to believe and trust him who gives it. Jesus here gives us himself and all he came to win for us. Let us rejoice and be glad to receive Jesus' sacrament often.

- Note how this gospel connects the kingdom of God on earth and the kingdom fully realized in heaven. The Christian faith will endure here on earth until we join with Jesus in his eternal banquet.

Read Mark 14:26-31

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

- Why does Jesus announce to his disciples that they will all fall away? You can never get away from this truth. Jesus' love and faithfulness to his disciples was constant. That the disciples will all fall away does not surprise Jesus. Jesus in love is still determined to save them.

- Why do the disciples, as Scripture prophesied, all fall away because of Jesus? The disciples just couldn't get their minds around the fact that God's anger would fall upon his own Son. They saw Jesus do miracles. Peter, James, and John had seen Jesus' transfiguration. The triumph of Palm Sunday had just happened. Jesus had even revealed his power to raise the dead. And now Jesus was predicting his own great suffering and death? The reason then that the disciples would all fall away is because they failed to truly listen to Jesus' exact prophesies of what was about to happen. The nature of faith is that it abandons reason and emotion and experience, and instead it trusts solely on Jesus and his Word. Because the disciples truly didn't listen to Jesus, they not only don't believe what Jesus said about his impending death. They also miss the comfort of his impending resurrection.

- What was wrong with Peter's emphatic denial that he would deny Jesus three times? Peter listened to his own sinful flesh and in self-righteousness contradicted and rejected the Word of Jesus.

Read Mark 14:32-42

Gethsemane

- How is Gethsemane the real beginning of Jesus' passion? We are about to see unveiled the heart of God. The weight of the world's sin and the Father's wrath and the punishment that both require are in play, and all we can do is watch and listen. Gethsemane was a favorite place for Jesus to go with his disciples. It was just outside the city. It was an olive grove with perhaps a press near at hand. It was a place where Jesus and his disciples could relax.

- Note Jesus' anguish and how Jesus prepares himself for the fact that the Father was about to strike him. Jesus goes to his heavenly Father in prayer. Read Daniel Deutchlander's comments, *Your Kingdom Come*, pages 484-486.

- For what does Jesus pray three times? Jesus prays that if it is possible this hour of his suffering might pass from him. See Jesus' face in the dirt, weeping and crying out loud to Abba, his dear, loving Father. But if what he asks of the Father is impossible, Jesus submits himself totally to the Father's will. Jesus was ready and willing to make full payment for the sins of the world.

- How is Jesus' prayer a model for our own? In every time of anguish we too submit our will to God's will for us. We trust God to do all things for our benefit. We look to God for the strength to endure until the day comes for God to rescue us and deliver us from every evil.

- How does Jesus encourage his sleeping disciples? Jesus puts the problem for his disciples and for us very simply, The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Throughout their lives Christians struggle against their sinful nature. The flesh and new spiritual nature are always at war. The disciples were still unprepared for what was about to happen.

- What dramatic shift do you see in Jesus after his three prayers? Jesus is ready to march forth to face his coming suffering without protest. In his active obedience Jesus is truly sinless, the perfect Lamb of God goes forth to be slaughtered. In his passive obedience Jesus will do nothing to hinder those who were about to humiliate and slaughter him.

Read Mark 14:43-52

Jesus' Arrest

- Describe the tumult that now takes place. Police from the temple, soldiers from the garrison, and Judas leading them. They were a crowd armed with swords and clubs. Jesus wasn't going to get away from them this time.

- How does Judas behave with utter hypocrisy? He gives an outwardly respectful greeting. The Greek verb is a strong one and suggests that Judas grabbed hold of Jesus and in an exaggerated way began to kiss him. Rabbi, I'm so glad to see you. And it was all so unnecessary as Jesus had come out at the head of his little band. Jesus doesn't push Judas away but even now calls him Friend. Even now Jesus is holding out to Judas an offer of forgiveness. That same forgiveness is there for us even for those times when we may have acted like hypocrite Christians.

- Why was Peter's act to defend Jesus with a sword an act of foolishness? The sword will never be the tool to bring people to Jesus. Throughout history people have tried to force people into the kingdom of God, but all the sword can create is hatred and even more hypocrisy in an act to avoid persecution. Peter's action continued to contradict Jesus' Word.

- Why did Jesus permit himself to be arrested like a criminal? Throughout this arrest Jesus remained calm and in complete control. Jesus permitted this to happen so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled. The hour for Jesus' suffering and death had now come. Jesus will do it all alone. No one will rob him of his glory, the glory of his name Jesus, the name that means Savior.

- Who was the young man who had followed Jesus and now fled away naked? We cannot know for sure but only Mark records this event in his gospel. Was it Mark himself? Again we cannot know for he is never mentioned in the Scriptures again.

Read Mark 14:53-65

Jesus' First Trial in the Sanhedrin

- Continue Jesus' story before the high priest. John (18:19-23) tells us that there was a preliminary hearing before Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. This left time for the Sanhedrin to gather. From top to bottom the whole procedure against Jesus is illegal: night trials, no charges for his arrest, pre-coached witnesses, a predetermined verdict. Jesus, the holy and innocent Son of God, will be condemned by those the world considered to be the best. Peter and John follow and separate. Peter is left alone in the courtyard. Why was Peter there? There is no good reason. Peter is in the wrong place, at the wrong time, for the wrong reason. Peter cannot help Jesus and Jesus did not want him there.

- What was the goal of the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin? Almost all of the 71 members of the Sanhedrin were there, except for maybe Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They were looking for testimony so that Jesus might be put to death. The devil and all those who hate Jesus become God's tools to accomplish the overthrow of the devil and to establish Jesus' eternal kingdom. But even now the testimony of the false witnesses about what Jesus had said did not agree.

- What did the high priest do when his anger and frustration about how this trial was going reached its boiling point? He took matters into his own hands. Jesus had not dignified this entire proceeding with even a single word. The high priest gets straight to the point. Jesus, are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One? And Jesus answers, I am, and then warns the high priest that one day he would return as Judge in power and great glory.

- How does the Sanhedrin exemplify well the nature of man as he is since the fall? Its members were wedded to pride and envy. They despised any contradiction of their own will and imagined merit. Jesus' words are welcomed with hate-filled rage and the high priest declares that no further witnesses are needed. There is delight in Jesus' suffering and glee over his pain. God did not spare his own Son (Romans 8:32). And Jesus took it all.

Read Mark 14:66-72

Peter Denies Jesus

- What happens to Peter while he is in the courtyard? A servant girl, who John tells us is the maid who let Peter into the courtyard, accuses Peter of being one of Jesus' disciples. Peter panics and denies the accusation. Gone from Peter's mind is Jesus' earlier warning. Peter sidles away from the fire and retreats to the covered passageway that divided the high priest's palace from the outside streets. But he doesn't escape his accusers. The second accusation comes from the same girl who accused him the first time. She is joined in her accusation by another maid and a man. It is likely that there were those present who now began to get agitated. Peter goes from the fire to the covered entryway and back again as the temperature rises. Yet Peter doesn't leave. Luke tells us that it was about an hour later. Once more the accusation is leveled against Peter, Surely you are one of them, because you are a Galilean. Peter denies it again, this time with curses and oaths. And the rooster crows for the second time. Luke tells us that it was at this moment that Jesus, as he was being led away, turns his head and looks at Peter. Then Peter remembers everything that Jesus had said and like a dagger it rips into his soul. And Peter broke down and wept.

- Could that glance of Jesus have also been directed to us? We are no better than Peter and we couldn't be any worse. Judas' repentance was a repentance of despair which led to his act of suicide. Peter's repentance was also filled with anguish. He too may have been on the brink of despair but he does not end his life in his grief. The look of Jesus kept him from going over the edge. Should we too experience the deepest grief over our own guilt, may the look of Jesus cause us to cling in sure confidence to everything Jesus willingly endured in his passion to save us.

Mark 15

Read Mark 15:1-19

Jesus' Trial in Pilate's Court

- Why did the Jewish Sanhedrin take Jesus to Pontius Pilate? The Sanhedrin had met twice. The first meeting was illegal for it was conducted at night. It ended when the rooster crowed the second time, about dawn. In capital cases a second hearing was required a day apart. Once again their rules were set aside and the second meeting took place early in the morning, two or three hours later. The Jewish leaders want this matter to be taken care of quickly before

opposition from the excitable Jewish pilgrims might arise. Carrying out a death penalty was a law the Romans reserved for themselves. Thus Jesus is brought before the Roman governor.

- What was the principal charge leveled against Jesus? The main charge was that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews. Jesus doesn't answer this or any of the other charges leveled against him. John (19:33-38) tells us that Jesus did answer Pilate's direct question about whether or not he was a king. Jesus is indeed the king of truth. Pilate came from a society that believed there was no truth except for the state and its power.

- Why did Pilate offer to release to them Jesus or Barabbas? It was customary at this time to grant to the people the release of one prisoner. Note that Pilate was fully aware of the envy of the chief priests and of the innocence of Jesus. Barabbas had been arrested for rebellion and murder. He hoped that the people would ask for Jesus to be released. When the crowd asked for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be crucified, Pilate gave in to the political pressure.

- Why was Jesus flogged before he was crucified? It was part of the process to inflict as much pain as possible. Mark's Roman readers would have been fully aware of how horrible scourging could be as it was often carried out on prisoners in Rome. Beaten with cords often implanted with pieces of bone or metal, this was a punishment just short of a death sentence. Pilate himself might have been shocked by Jesus' appearance. John tells us that Pilate at the end simply declares, Behold the man!

- What is our reaction to Jesus' unjust suffering? We know this story so well. Yet shall we not deeply grieve as we recall it? We grieve all the more as we take into account that it is for our sins that Jesus was suffering. And yet at the same time we say, Yes, Lord Jesus! Do it! Do it! Do it all for me, for me a sinner, for me a child of death, for me, all undeserving! (*Your Kingdom Come*, page 523).

Read Mark 15:20-32

The Crucifixion

- Describe how Mark records the central act of human history on which our whole salvation depends. He does so with utter simplicity, with such matter-of-factness as also the other holy writers record it. But how could it be otherwise. It would take an eternity to describe even a single aspect of what here takes place - the depth of Jesus' anguish, the depth of all human guilt present there, the horror of souls addicted to cruelty, the consequences for the world, for the church in general, for each of us one by one.

- What honor is forced on Simon of Cyrene? He is drafted by the Roman soldiers to carry Jesus' cross after Jesus collapses and can no longer do so. Simon is not drafted out of any compassion for Jesus. The soldiers just want to get the job done. That Simon is mentioned by name together with two of his sons (Rufus and Alexander) leads us to guess that this family may have been known to Mark's readers in Rome.

- Why is Jesus offered a concoction of vinegar and wine? It was mixed with a drug to help deaden the senses. This was not offered out of compassion for Jesus but to make the one to be crucified easier to handle as he was nailed to the cross. The tense of the verbs used by the gospels suggest that they tried to force this mixture on Jesus. But Jesus refused to drink it. It boggles our mind. Jesus had already suffered so much and that suffering was going to continue and increase. But Jesus insists on bearing the full penalty of suffering for us. Truly this is no bargain-basement redemption!

- How does Daniel Deutchlander describe Jesus' crucifixion? Read the three paragraphs after the hymn verse, pp. 525-526, of *Your Kingdom Come*.

- How do many people add to Jesus' suffering and humiliation? There was the mocking superscription stating the charge against Jesus, the fact that Jesus was crucified with two other criminals, the ridicule of those who passed by, the mockery of the chief priests and the experts in the law and even the two criminals. The fact that we don't join them is only due to faith, the miracle of the gospel.

Read Mark 15:33-37

Jesus' Death

- What is the first sign in nature of the real horror of what is happening on the cross? The sun failed (Luke) and darkness came over the whole land from noon to three. This is not an eclipse or an allegory. God himself has shut off the lights. This will happen again on the last day. But even this does not touch the conscience of the mockers at the foot of the cross.

- Mustering all of his remaining strength, what is Jesus' final tormented cry? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This is the opening line of Psalm 22. Notice the little word my. The Father has turned away from Jesus but Jesus has not turned away from God, though here Jesus does not call him Father.

- What makes hell a place that is unspeakably horrible? There is nothing worse than to be utterly abandoned by God, forever separated from his mercy and grace. Read the first full paragraph in *Your Kingdom Come* on page 532.

- What was the response of those standing near Jesus when he speaks his final tormented cry? The mockery of the Jews finds its final depth. They twist Jesus' words. Was he truly calling out to God or maybe only to a prophet?

- What final words of Jesus are recorded by Luke and John? I thirst (John 19:28). Jesus receives moisture from a sponge so that he can cry out his last words as he dies. It is finished! (John 19:30) and Father, into your hands I commit my spirit! (Luke 23:46). Jesus sighs in triumph. The Father will welcome him home. His work for our salvation is completed and finished.

Read Mark 15:38-41

- What other miracles attend Jesus' death? The mighty curtain, heavy and thick, between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the temple splits in two. Matthew tells us that there was also a mighty earthquake. The earth joins the sun to testify to this monstrous act which has just taken place. The faith of the centurion was also a miracle. He witnessed all that had happened and comes to the correct conclusion. Jesus is truly the Son of God.

- Who were the women who were watching from a distance? There was Mary Magdalene from whom Jesus had cast out demons, Mary (possibly the sister-in-law of Jesus' mother), the mother of James and Joses who were cousins of Jesus, and Salome, the mother of James and John. Jesus' mother isn't mentioned but it is possible that she has already left with John. These and other women had followed and served Jesus when he was in Galilee.

Read Mark 15:42-47

Jesus' Burial

- How did Joseph of Arimathea now boldly confess his faith in Jesus? He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He wanted Jesus' body to be properly laid to rest before the beginning of the fast approaching Sabbath. Isaiah (53:9) had prophesied that the burial of Jesus

would be with the rich. Joseph steps up and does this supreme good, when the disciples are Missing In Action. (Some traditions say that Joseph was a Christian after Pentecost and went around the year 63 to preach the gospel in England.)

- What happens to Jesus' body after it is taken down from the cross? Read the last two paragraphs on page 541 of *Your Kingdom Come* and the last paragraph on page 542.

Mark 16

Read Mark 16:1-8

The Resurrection

- Who witnesses the glory of Jesus' resurrection? Thousands see the humiliation and disgrace of Jesus' crucifixion. But of his resurrection no one was an eyewitness. The most glorious moment in human history is only seen by the eyes of faith. The risen Jesus will appear first to the women who early Sunday morning go to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body, then to some of Jesus' disciples. Finally hundreds of others see and hear him.

- Who denies the glory of Jesus' resurrection? Jesus' resurrection is a historical fact. It's not a theory or a pious wish or an invention of the disciples. But such is the claim of all those who refuse to see him with the eyes of faith.

- Consider the evidence. All four gospels present the resurrection as history as does the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15). This together with Jesus' virgin birth are the two pillars of Christianity. This is the testimony of the unerring Word of God.

- Consider a summary of the events of Easter Sunday. Read the summary of the renowned Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard in *Your Kingdom Come*, page 544-545. Then also read the comments of Daniel Deutschlander until the top of page 547.

- Who were the women Mark tells us set out very early for Jesus' tomb? Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The law required rest on the Sabbath (extending from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday.) This prevented them from the anointing of Jesus' body in accord with Jewish custom. In spite of whatever disappointment or grief they had at Jesus' death, they could not leave Jesus' funeral arrangements unfinished. The women are eager to get to the tomb because bodies could decay very rapidly in that climate.

- What problem did not seem to have occurred to them? They apparently did not know about the soldiers Pilate had stationed at the tomb he had sealed. They also had not thought about how they would roll away the heavy stone which had been rolled into its groove. Imagine their amazement when they found the stone had already been moved away. They can only believe that the tomb has been violated. Matthew tells us that an angel had come and rolled away the stone. By the time the women arrived, the angel has already gone inside. Filling in the blanks from the other gospels, Mary Magdalene does not go into the tomb but flees, apparently going back to the city to look for help, and the other women flee in confusion as well.

- When the women enter the tomb, what do they see? They see a young man dressed in a white robe with light that banishes all the gloom. (Matthew and Mark only mention this one angel, the one who speaks. Luke and John mention that a second angel was there as well. One was sitting where Jesus' head had been and the other where Jesus' feet had been.)

- What is the powerful and absolute message the angel shares with them? There was no need to be afraid. Jesus has risen. Now they were to go and tell Jesus' disciples. What an honor and a reward Jesus gives to these women. It was just as Jesus had told them. Jesus would meet all of them in Galilee.

- What was the reaction of the women? They were trembling and perplexed and afraid. So they didn't say anything to anyone. Isn't it amazing that the women were filled with joy and fear at the same time?

Read Mark 16:9-14

The Risen Savior Appears

- What additional information are we given about Mary Magdalene? She is the first to whom Jesus appears. Jesus pays special attention to her needs as he does to Peter, in another form to the two disciples who were walking along in the country to Emmaus, and then to the eleven. Mary's devotion to Jesus who had driven from her the demons and her devastation at his death had been so great. And now she thought Jesus' body had disappeared.

- What does Mark tell us Jesus said to the disciples? Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen him after he had risen. Yes, some believe and some don't and some go back and forth from one to the other. Luke tells us that the unbelief in some was a mix of confusion and joy. For a week Thomas refused to believe. The real marvel is that Jesus comes to them and doesn't just leave them. At the same time John tells us that Jesus' first words to them were, Peace be with you. Finally they rejoice and believe. And here's another miracle. We too have heard the voice of Jesus and have believed.

- Consider three great and indispensable truths of the resurrection which are central to our faith and life? Read them on page 556 of *Your Kingdom Come*.

Read Mark 16:15-20

- Once again we focus on the commentary of Daniel Deutschlander in *Your Kingdom Come*. Read the first two paragraphs found on page 558.

- Does Jesus' message of good news truly matter? There is nothing more important than Jesus' message of full and free forgiveness brought by and bought by the King himself. It contains the power of the King and his Spirit is in it. By his gospel message of good news the King can raise us from spiritual death to spiritual life. It can turn us to grateful, even loving, submission to the God who has become our Savior. So now the task of his kingdom is to proclaim this message of good news to all creation.

- What is the promise to those who believe and are baptized? Saving faith is not a work that man does in obedience to a law, which somehow merits or contributes to his salvation. Salvation is entirely God's free gift caused by God's own grace and Jesus' saving merit. Baptism is also an undeserved gift from God. The Holy Spirit is there in baptism to make us children of God the Father and to cloth us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ who has washed all our sins away. Baptism is not another gospel; it is just an added way of giving us just what the gospel gives.

- What signs does Jesus announce will certify the truth of Jesus' gospel? They are listed in verses 17-18. Many of these signs are evident in the book of Acts. Once the gospel message was established, the signs gradually disappeared. The spiritual fulfillment of Jesus' promise is an even more powerful witness to the power of Jesus' Word.

- How does Mark conclude his gospel? There is a gap in time between verses 18 and 19. Jesus met with the disciples in Galilee and also appeared to them at other times. Finally, forty days after his resurrection Jesus in the vicinity of Bethany ascends back into heaven. Jesus does

not simply disappear. He rises into the air until he either vanishes in the distance or in the clouds. This is Jesus' coronation day and Mark refers to Jesus as Lord. Jesus is both Savior and King. The right hand of God is his position of power and glory and majesty. From that day on Jesus has carried on his work of preaching and teaching his Word through us and confirming it in those who believe that his gospel message is absolutely true. This was the ultimate goal of Jesus' three-year ministry. This was the point of Pentecost. Jesus' Kingdom has gone out into all the world. And he will always be with you even more than you could be with him. So: Listen!

Close with selected verses from 1 Corinthians 15.