

THE BEGINNING OF THE
GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST,
THE SON OF GOD...



MARK THESE WORDS

PART 2

MARK 3:22-9:13

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God".

These are the very first words in the book of Mark, which serve both as an epic introduction to the book, but also to this journey you're about to undertake!

In order to thoroughly journey through the book of Mark you will need to engage with it in three different ways:

I. LISTEN

- This is the Sunday Sermon, where you will find space to make notes, as well as to further reflect on the Sermon.
- If you happen to miss a Sunday you can always download the sermon recording from our website (www.ebcsa.org.za/resources), or order the CD.

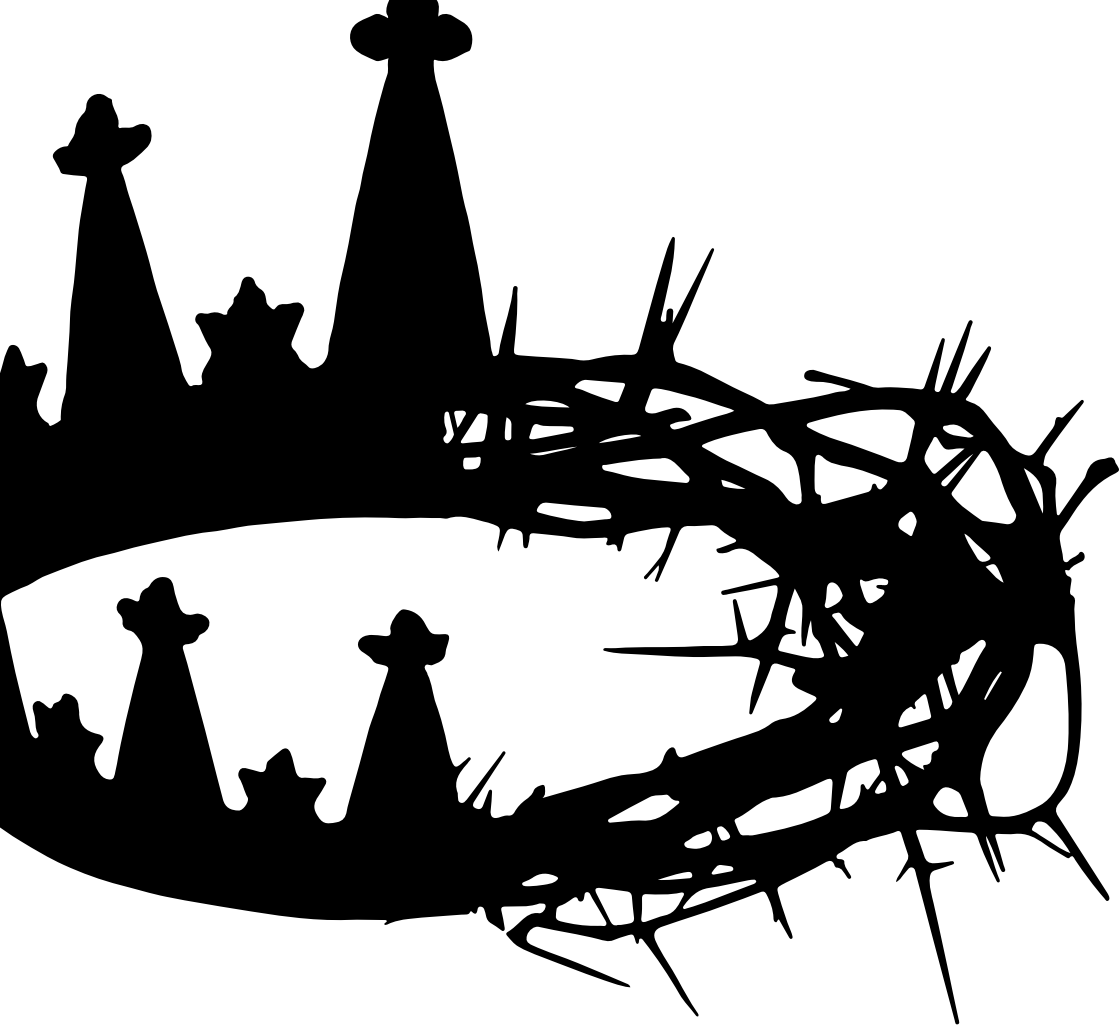
2. PRAY

- One of the greatest ways of growing in your relationship with God is simply learning to read & pray scripture in the context of your daily life.
 - In order to help you develop this aspect of your relationship with God we've put together a 'devotional guide' through a selection of passages in Mark.
 - The outline given in this book is for your own personal reflection, but we've also put together a video devotional for each of these passages. In these videos our various teachers will act as 'tour guides', highlighting interesting parts of the passage and helping you apply it to your life in prayer. To access the weekly videos check our youtube channel or the website video portal.

3. SHARE

- God has designed it that we grow better together, by sharing our experiences and Christian journey with each other.
- To this end we have put together a small-group guide, which has questions on selected passages to be explored in a small group.
- We hope that this is in an EBC Homecell, where we encourage everyone to join these vibrant small communities of faith!
- However these can also be used as family devotionals, or perhaps as an outreach or bible study in the workplace. There is a detailed leader's guide available as well, which can be emailed to you should you want to start a study group.

The only way you will be exposed to every verse in the book of Mark is to engage in all three of these ways! If you would like help with either of these paths, please don't hesitate to contact us!



Week 7: 23-29 April

MARK 3:22-35

As we return to the book of Mark we again see the religious leaders confronting Jesus. They could not deny the power Jesus was displaying; however, the source of that power is what they choose to question. The religious leaders outright accused Jesus of being possessed by Satan. **Do you think they really believed this? Or did they just not want to admit that Jesus was truly God?**

Jesus replies in verse 27 by asserting that He is stronger than Satan. He is also making it known that He will bind Satan and plunder his house. **Do you see this battle still going on today?**

C.S. Lewis said the following: "there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them." **What is the importance of acknowledging the spiritual battle that is going on around us? What is the danger of overemphasising it?**

In verse 29 Jesus makes mention of the 'eternal sin', referring to the unwillingness of the religious leaders believe the truth of the gospel. *By that, we see that the only 'unpardonable' or 'eternal' sin is an unrepentant spirit.*

The frightening thing here is that we see that it is possible to be moral and religious and still miss the truth of the gospel. Often times a lack of repentance can be displayed as religious pride. **Do you see this in your life, or the lives of others?**



It seems like tough words were used by Jesus in this passage, which is a stern reminder that our spiritual relationships are just as important as our natural relationships, and can often be even stronger!

Read Mark 3:31-35

Chew

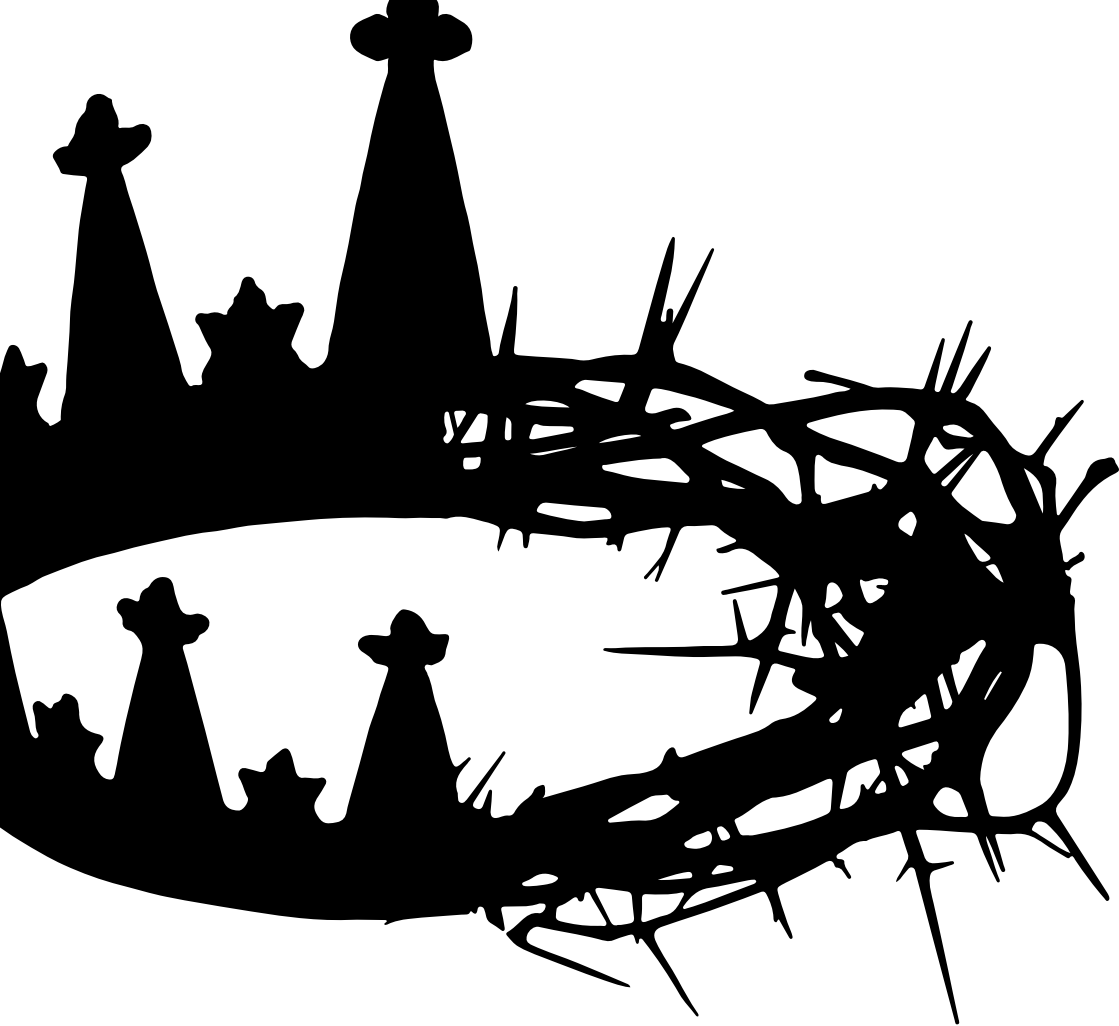
- Jesus had two half brothers – James and Jude, who both wrote epistles (letters) but never mentioned Christ as their physical brother. Why do you think this is?
- Do you think Jesus was minimising the importance of 'natural' families? What point was he making about the nature of relationships in the Kingdom?
- What is the one 'requirement' to be considered spiritual 'family' (v35)?

Taste

- What does this say about the depth of relationship we should have with fellow believers? Consider our earthly families and what that means for our new 'spiritual' family.

Digest

- What relationship do you have with your brothers and sisters in Christ? What relationships need to deepen? Is there a broken relationship you need to pray about?
- Who in your family does not yet know Christ and how has this affected your relationship with them?



Week 8: 30 Apr - 6 May

MARK 4: 1-34



How did you respond when you first heard the Gospel? A response to the gospel is always given, either through acceptance or rejection. In this passage Jesus explains what genuine acceptance looks like. A lamp is not bought to be hidden, just as the light of Christ in the Christian is made to shine before humanity.

Read Mark 4:21-25

Chew

- What is the 'light', and what does it have to do with you and those around you?
- Think about the how absurd Jesus' example is of 'buying a lamp to bring light where it is not needed.' Can you think of any similar examples?

Taste

- What is the light meant to do in your life and to those around you? How is that happening?

Digest

- Reflect on what you could do right now in your life to bring the light of Jesus to the darkness of the world.
- Who was it who reflected the light of Christ to you? How did they do that? Thank God for them now.

The first 34 verses of Mark chapter 4 are filled with the parables of Jesus. For our study this week, we will look at the final two parables in this section.

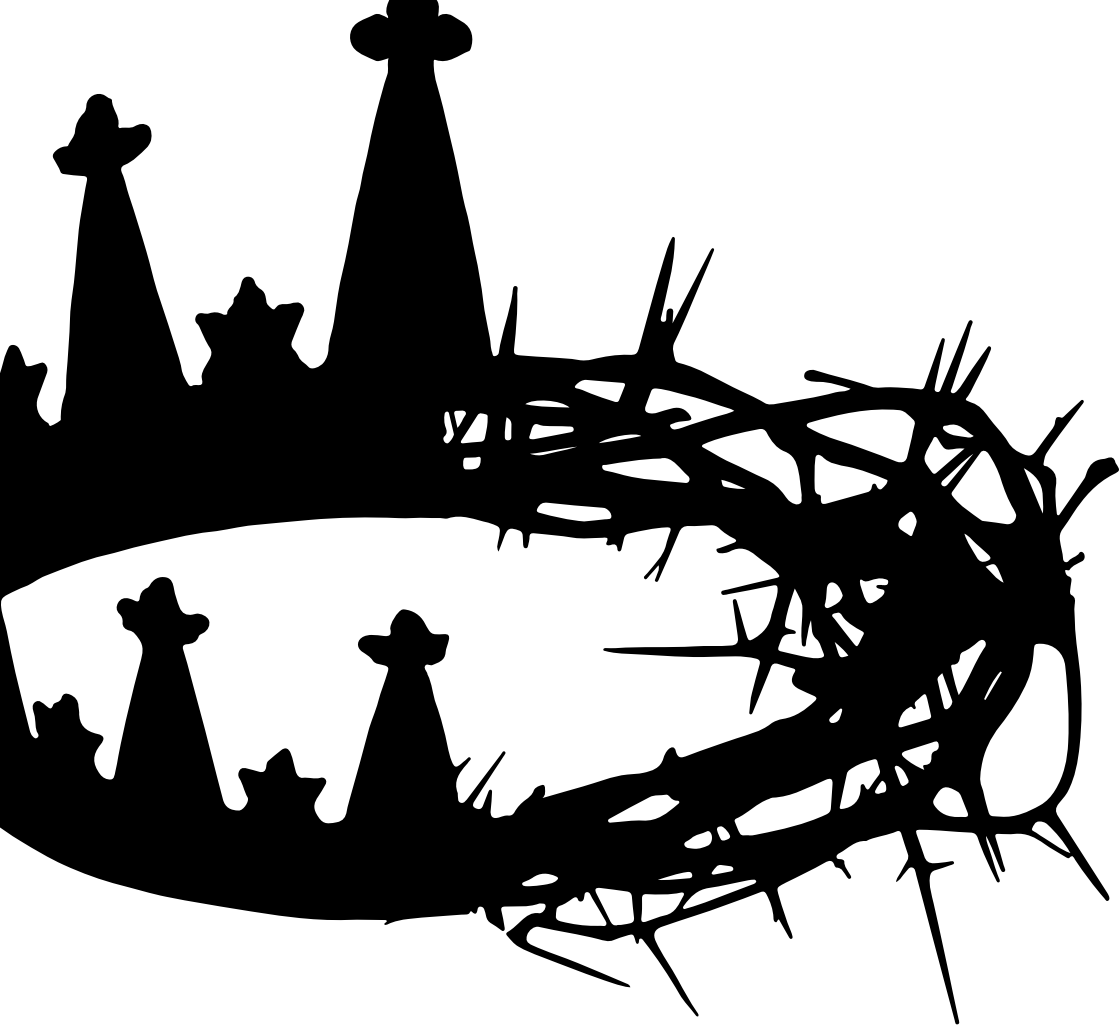
The first parable we find is the parable of the Growing Seed. This particular parable is similar to the parable of the farmer scattering seed; however, in it Jesus is emphasising the mysterious power of the seed.

Take a look at verses 27 & 28. What do you think Jesus is aiming to teach us about the Kingdom of God in these verses?

While we see the importance of the farmer sowing the seed, it is said that the "earth produces the crops on its own." Jesus makes it clear that the gospel has a power all of its own, a power that often cannot be explained. **Do you struggle with not being able to explain or sometimes even understand the power of the gospel?**

In verses 30-32, Jesus shares the parable of the Mustard Seed. Take a moment to read back over these three verses. **What do you think Jesus is aiming to teach us about the Kingdom of God in this parable?**

The Kingdom of God is not always something we can understand or explain. It often goes about things in a way that is the complete opposite of what we expect. As we conclude tonight's study, **consider how you can align your life more closely with the Kingdom of God. The growth of Kingdom might seem gradual at times, but it is definite. How are you involved in its growth?**



Week 9: 7-13 May

MARK 4: 35 - 5:20

Today we find the familiar account of Jesus calming the storm. In verse 38, we see Jesus asleep in the back of the boat. Once again, Mark puts Jesus' humanity on display. The idea of Jesus as both fully God and fully man can be a difficult one to comprehend. **Do you find it unsettling to see the Son of God as human?**

Jesus woke up and rebuked the waves, and they were instantly calm. If we think about a storm, usually it dies down slowly, over time. But not when Jesus speaks. When Jesus spoke, the natural elements ceased immediately.

The same power is also available to bring peace into our hearts and lives. **Take a moment to reflect on your own life and the storms you are facing. Is Jesus' presence in that storm affecting your attitude towards it?**

The disciples have been on a journey with Jesus. They had seen him do amazing wonders and works, and still they seem to be lacking in faith. **Why do you think that is?** Maybe the disciples are like you and me, sometimes allowing their circumstances to stay in the forefront of their minds, rather than keeping Jesus there.

In the Jewish culture, they knew that God himself controlled the wind and waves. **Take a few minutes to look at Psalm 65:7, Psalm 89:9, and Psalm 107:29.** The disciples did not expect this kind of power to come from a human. Jesus is clearly seen as Lord over creation.

The disciples ask a very important question that we must also ask, "who is this man?". **Who is Jesus to you? Do you recognise His deity? Do you understand His power and presence in your life and in the world around you?**



What was the last thing that made you terrified? The question 'Who is this man?' summarises one of the dominant themes of Mark's gospel. All the way through the book we see various responses from people. In this passage we see even those close to Jesus are still wrestling with this question. It was not just the storm that scared the disciples, but also the answer to it!

Read Mark 4:35-41

Chew

- What type of storm would make experienced fisherman terrified?
- Who/what does Jesus rebuke? (Two things)
- Who/what are the disciple terrified of? (Two things)
- How should the disciples have reacted in this situation?

Taste

- How have you answered this question about Jesus? i.e. Who is this man?
- How has this answer changed the way you live your life?
- What comfort does it bring to see even the disciple wrestling to understand who Jesus is?
- Since Jesus has authority to calm the storm, what comfort should that bring to us?

Digest

- Spend some time confessing the times you have doubted.
- Spend some time asking God to help your unbelief, and build your faith.



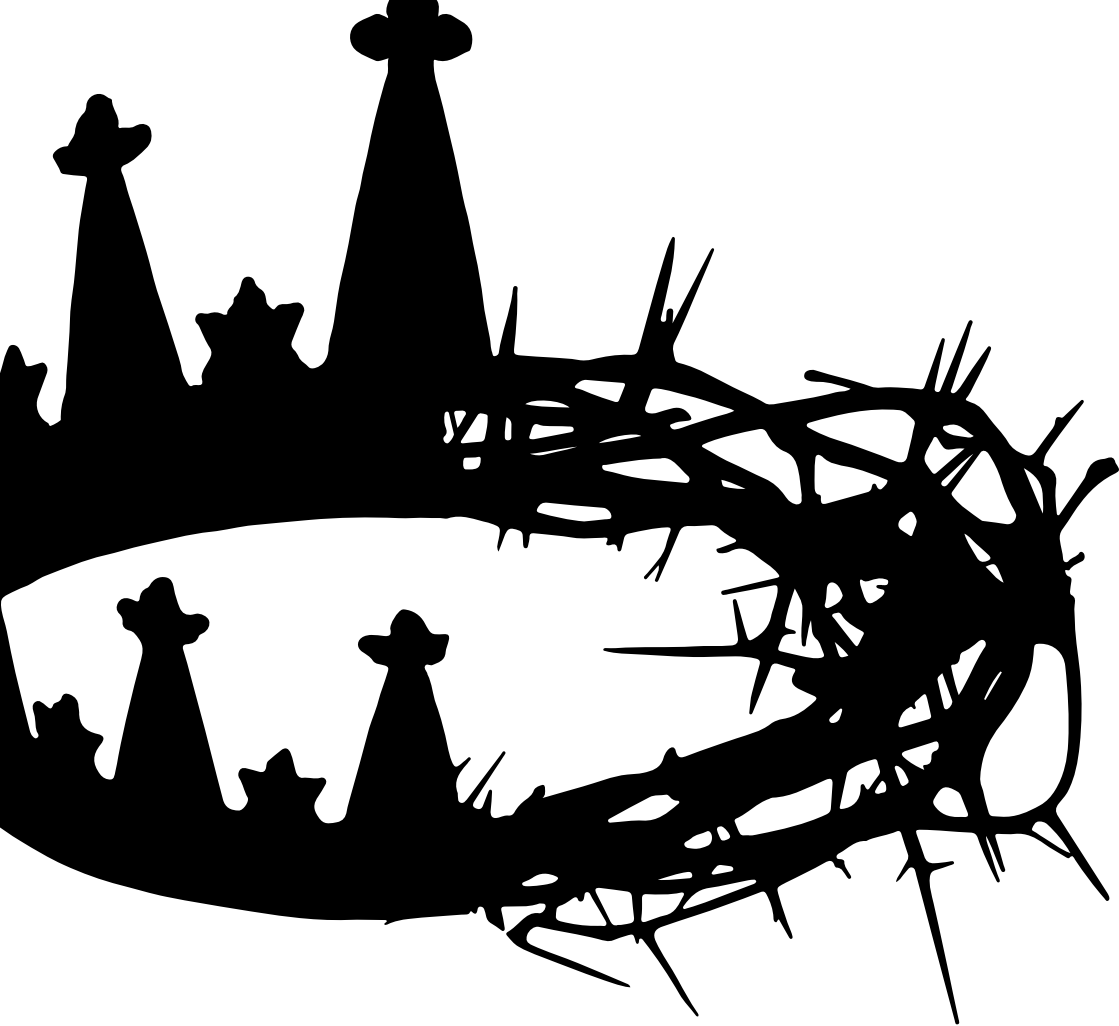


Message Notes

How did God speak to you through this passage?

What can you implement in your life from this passage this week?

What are you going to pray for?



Week 10: 14-20 May

MARK 5:21-43



Have you ever had to put anything on the line because of your faith in Jesus? Jairus held a respected position in his community by being a synagogue leader. While many were unsure of what to make of Jesus, many in the synagogue circle did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Yet in desperation Jairus disregards what reaching out to Jesus might cost his reputation, humbles himself, and begs Jesus to heal his daughter.

Read Mark 5:21-24

Chew

- What was at stake for Jairus to reach out to Jesus?
- Twice the passage reveals, 'large crowds gathered around Jesus', yet Jesus grants the request of one man. Why was this? What were the crowds doing or not doing?

Taste

- What was the difference between the crowd and Jairus?
- How might we fall into the crowd instead of coming to Jesus?
- What has following Jesus cost you?

Digest

- Spend some time praising God for the situation that brought you to Jesus.
- How does this account help us to come to Jesus in the midst of helpless situations, despite the consequences? Pray to Him now.

As we look at the passage for this week, we see Jesus raising the dead for the first time in His public ministry.

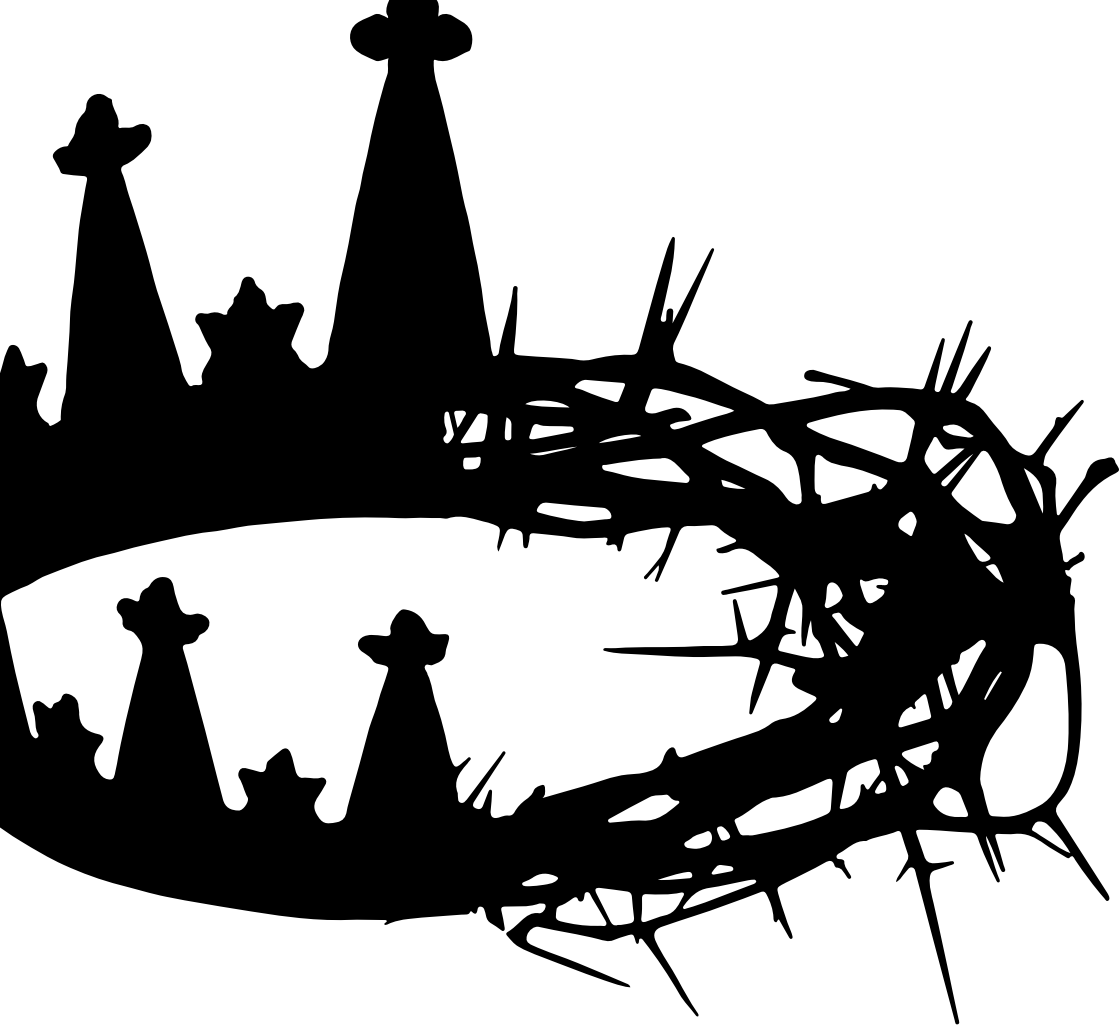
Jairus, a synagogue ruler, actually meets Jesus in verse 22. It is clear that he is a highly respected man, both socially and morally. The astonishing part of the story, however, is that he demonstrates humility in falling at Jesus' feet. He also risks censure by the synagogue for aligning himself with Jesus! **What do these things show us about the character of Jairus and his understanding of who Jesus is?**

Take a moment to notice Jesus' response to Jairus in verse 26. Jesus urges Jairus to maintain the faith he initially demonstrated in coming to Jesus. **Jesus seems to imply that the present, continuous action of faith is the opposite of fear. Do you believe this to be true? Can faith and fear coexist?**

As the story unfolds, Jesus makes His way to Jairus' home. Once there, Jesus commands the crowd to stay outside and enters the room with only the girl's parents and three of the disciples. He takes the girl's hand and tells her to get up. Jairus had faith that Jesus would heal his daughter, and He did just that. **Why do you think Jesus took this particular approach in bringing the girl back to life?**

Consider what would have happened if these kinds of stories did not have such happy endings. **What if Jesus chose not to heal Jairus' daughter? Does faith in Jesus guarantee healing?**

Consider this statement in regards to your own life: 'Our faith must rest on Him, not merely on our agenda for Him'. Where is your faith resting?



Week 11: 21-27 May

MARK 6:1-29

In the beginning of Mark 6, Jesus makes His way back to His hometown to minister to the people there. However, the welcome isn't as warm as it has been in other areas.

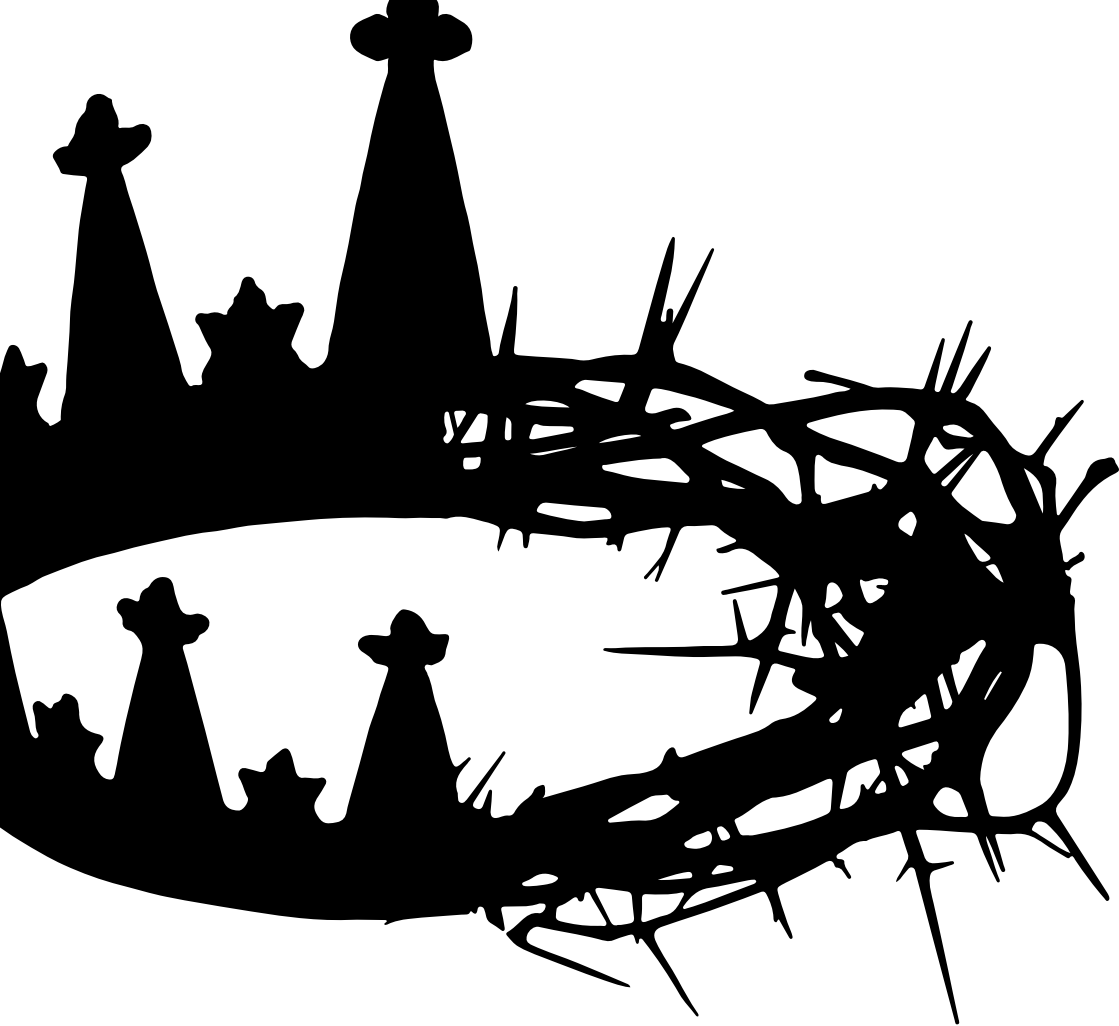
In verses 2 and 3, we see that the people of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth were deeply offended by Jesus' teaching and refused to believe in Him. They seem to struggle to reconcile what they think they know about Jesus with the things they see and hear Him doing. Let's take a look at what was influencing their opinion of Jesus:

1. Low socio-economic status and ordinary background
2. Limited formal education
3. Lack of an officially sanctioned religious position

The people of Nazareth must have heard about the miraculous works Jesus was performing wherever He went, and yet, they still chose to let what they thought they knew about Him be the basis for their belief. **Why do you think that is?**

The residents of Nazareth were deeply offended at Jesus' posturing Himself as some great teacher. They refused to see Him as higher than themselves and found it impossible to accept Him as the Son of God and Messiah. They couldn't see him as anything other than ordinary. **In what ways do you think that Christ and His message are still offensive in this way today?**

Jesus knows God intimately. He knows that He is the source of love and joy. He knows that He is sovereign over the world and is the very definition of good. He must be shocked that people would choose not to trust in Him. **What is your response when people reject the gospel message?**



Week 12: 28 May - 3 June

MARK 6:30-56

When we pick up with Jesus in verse 45, He has just completed the feeding of the 5 000, and is now topping that by walking on water!

In verse 48, Mark tells us that Jesus was walking on the water towards the disciples and that He 'intended to go past them'. **Can you think of any reason Jesus would do this?**

To answer that question, we need to look ahead to verse 50. Here Jesus refers to Himself as "I AM." Referring to Himself as this, as well as passing them by, is a clear indication that He is the Creator God. The language found here is the same as in Moses' encounters with God both at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-17) and when Moses asks to see God's face (Exodus 33:18-34:9). Jesus is clearly wanting to remind them of who He truly is—the Creator God! **Why do you think Jesus felt the need to remind the disciples of this truth?**

Jesus knows that the disciples often fail to apply their knowledge of who He is to their present situation. **How can you better apply your knowledge of who Jesus is to present situations in your life?**

In verse 51 and 52, we see the response of the disciples to the miracle that Jesus just performed. Mark states that "their hearts were too hard to take it in." The hardness of heart that Mark is speaking of is in regards to the fact that the disciples allow fear to come before faith. Faith is reminding ourselves of who He is and acting upon that knowledge in practical situations. **What areas of your life would look different if you put faith ahead of fear?**



This account of Jesus healing the sick in Gennesaret acts as a summary of Jesus' ministry prior to his departure for Tyre & Sidon. Tied to the story of Jesus calming the storm it again summarises Jesus' authority over all of creation, especially it's 'defects'!

Read Mark 6:53-56

Chew

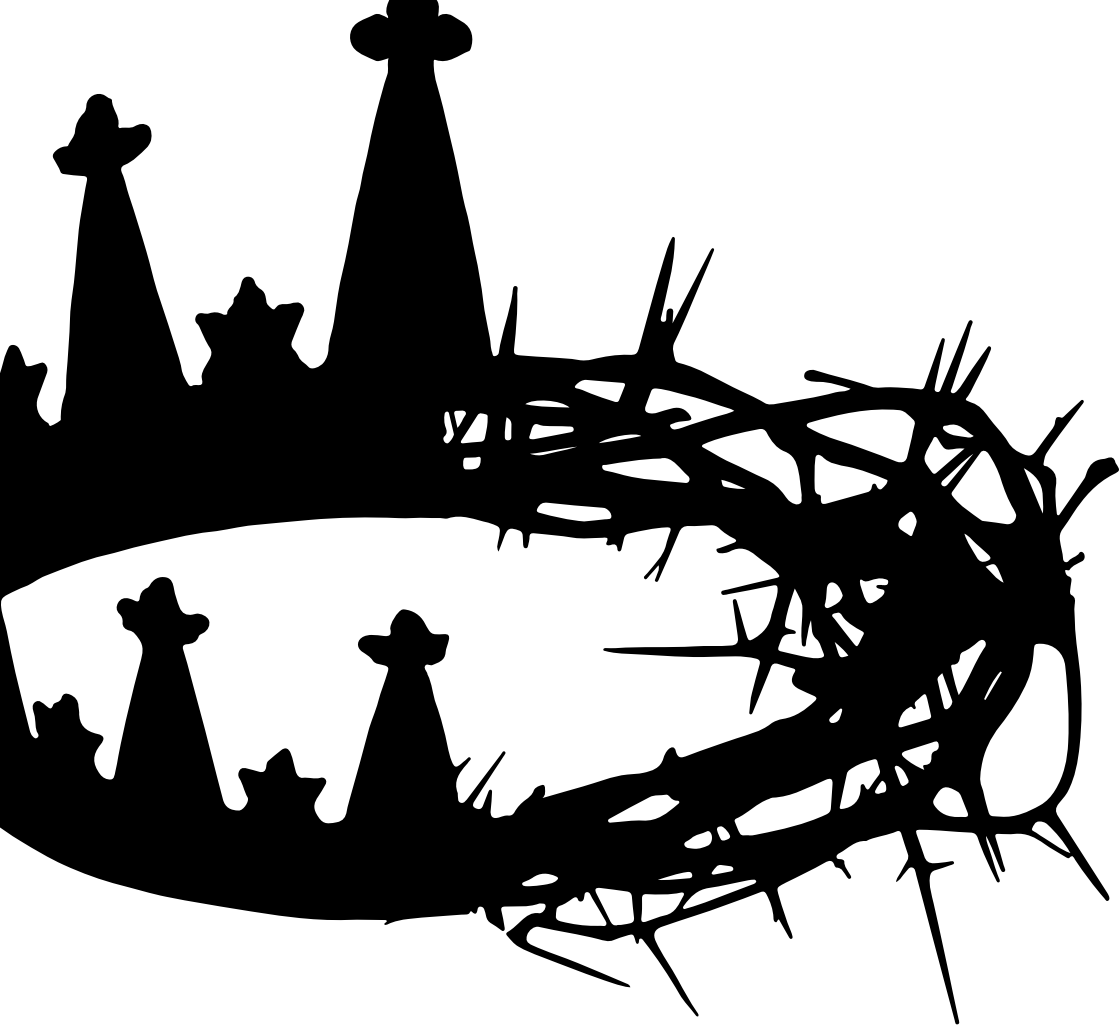
- What do you think created the excitement in this region?
- What does the people's frantic efforts to bring their sick to Jesus indicate about their belief in Him?

Taste

- It's strange that the preaching of the gospel, or any kind of teaching, is absent in this display of Jesus' miracles. Mark normally ensures that it's present. Why do you think Mark still includes this story?
- Perhaps this passage shows Jesus' patience and compassion despite people's misconceptions about Him. How does this comfort you?

Digest

- Pray simply for your own needs today, trusting in Christ's compassion and ability to heal.
- Pray also for the needs of those close to you and around you, again simply trusting in the compassion and power of Jesus.



Week 13: 4-10 June

MARK 7:1-30



Message Notes

How did God speak to you through this passage?

What can you implement in your life from this passage this week?

What are you going to pray for?



Jesus has been confronting the religious leaders, who are convinced that being right with God means obeying rules and traditions. Today he will dig deeper with the sharp edge of a parable!

Read Mark 7:14-23

Chew

- Verse 15 seems counter-intuitive. We would think that by eating bad food, for instance, that it would 'defile' or poison our stomachs. So what is Jesus referring to here? Read verse 19 for help.
- What does the end of verse 19 have to say about the Old Testament dietary laws (eg forbidding the eating of Pork)?

Taste

- According to verse 23, what is to be blamed for the list of 'defilements' in verse 21-22?
- What do you think is the solution to a defilement of the heart? How do we receive 'inner cleansing'?

Digest

- According to Jesus defilement comes from the inside, not the outside, and so we need inner renewal.
- Spend time confessing evidences of 'defielment' in your own life. Perhaps use verse 21-22 as a start.
- Then pray simply for your own inner renewal, for a new heart, new desires, new behaviours. This is what Jesus came to do, so you can pray this in confidence!



As we pick up with Jesus in verse 24, He has just arrived in the region of Tyre. As soon as He had arrived in the city, a woman came to Him and begged Him to heal her daughter, as she was possessed by an evil spirit.

Jesus' response seems incredibly politically incorrect! Various biblical commentators have called this response an "apparent refusal," which is designed to discern the basis for the woman's request. **If you were the woman in this story, what would your response to Jesus have been?**

The woman in this story does not have a conventional response. **Read verse 28.** If we look closely at her response, we see two things clearly:

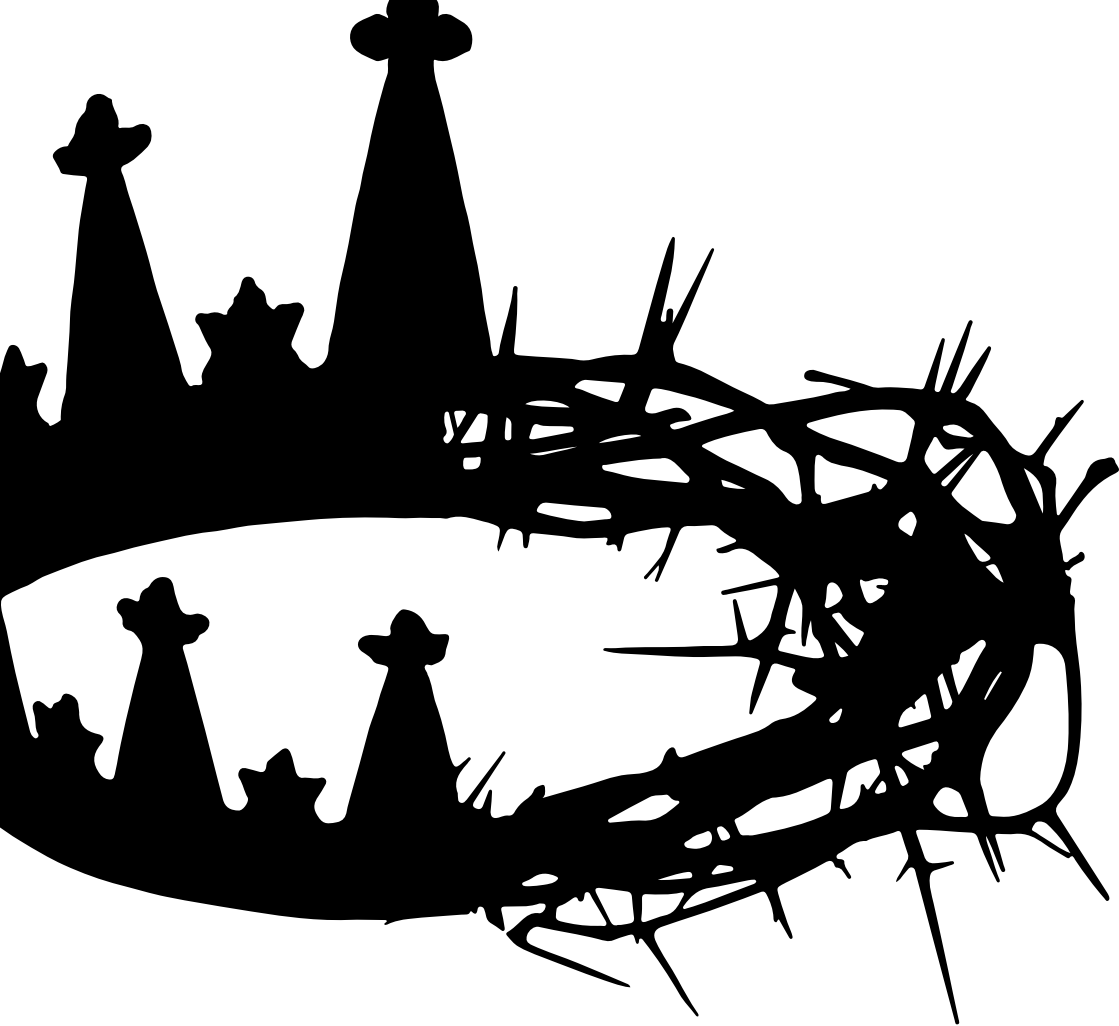
1. She takes no offence. She seems to know that she doesn't deserve a place at the table. She is a human sinner who doesn't deserve Jesus' help.
2. She comes to Christ humbly. Not asking for a seat at the table, but merely the scraps left over. She shows extreme confidence in the mercy and power of Christ.

We can learn so much from her response to Jesus. She comes with bold humility, something that only a proper understanding of herself and Jesus can create. She understood the magnitude of her sin and what it meant for her standing with Christ; however, she also understood the magnitude of His grace. To fail to understand either of these things is to fail to find Jesus as Saviour.

There are two extremes in our response to our sin:

1. Pride—not understanding the weight of our sin
2. Despair—not understanding the greatness of God's grace

Take a moment to consider which extreme you tend to lean towards in your own life. The solution for the problem of sin is not striving for moral perfection, but rather admitting our own failure and trusting completely in the mercy and grace of Christ.



Week 14: 11-17 June

MARK 7:31-8:13



Message Notes

How did God speak to you through this passage?

What can you implement in your life from this passage this week?

What are you going to pray for?

In this passage we see the second feeding miracle Jesus performed. While it is quite similar to the feeding of the five thousand found earlier in Mark, it is clearly a different account.

One major difference is location. We know by making note of Jesus' journey in the previous chapter that He had travelled into the region of Decapolis, a gentile area. The main difference between these two accounts therefore is that Jesus is serving a Gentile, multi-ethnic crowd instead of a Jewish-only crowd. **Why do you think this is significant? It seems Mark is intent on displaying Jesus as Saviour of the whole world, not only the Jewish people!**

A second thing to note in this story is the response of the disciples when Jesus mentioned the hunger of the people and His desire to feed them. **Take a look back at the account and note how the disciples responded. What surprises you about their response?**

The disciples seem to be at a loss as to how they can feed all these people, and yet, just a few chapters earlier, Jesus fed an even larger crowd! If we look back at the previous feeding, their response was strikingly similar. **Why do you think this is?**

Mark is obviously trying to show us just how great human spiritual blindness can be. *The disciples continue to fail to apply what they know about Jesus to their present situation.*

But before we become shocked at their response, it is important for us to see ourselves in them. **Take some time to consider how short our spiritual memories are, and how quick we are to slide back to anxiety and worry.**

As we end, take a moment to consider how Jesus has shown up for you in the past, and how that can anchor you in future times of worry.



Can you remember the last time you were in conflict with someone? In the context of Mark, this account is the last conflict that Jesus has with the Pharisees before entering into Jerusalem. It appears that up until this point everything that Jesus has done has not been 'good enough' for the Pharisees, yet they still demand more of the same of what they have already rejected! They are more concerned about up holding 'their law' above the mercy of their neighbour and continue to reject Jesus as their Messiah despite the evidence.

Read Mark 8:11-13

Chew

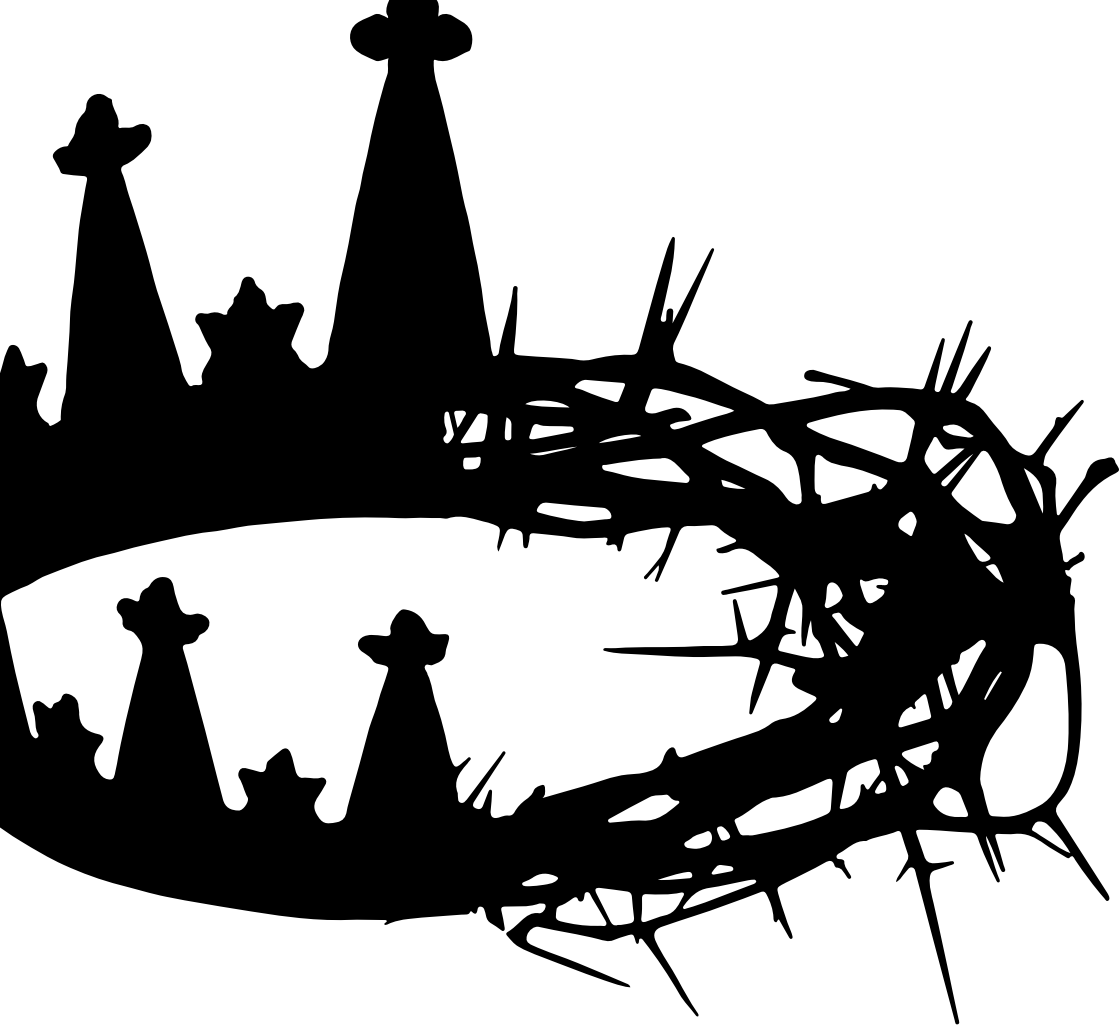
- What do you think about Jesus' method of evangelism?
- What do you think would happen if Jesus did give a sign?
- Would they become disciples of Jesus?
- Why or why not?

Taste

- Where does the power of salvation come from?
- In the face of opposition where can we put our confidence?
- What encouragement can we take from Jesus' interaction with various people?

Digest

- Spend some time praying for those who you find particularly challenging to share the gospel with.
- Spend some time praying for those who make unrealistic demands upon your life.
- Spend some time confessing when you have made unrealistic demands upon others.



Week 15: 18-24 June

MARK 8:14-26

In today's passage, we find Jesus healing a man of physical blindness. **When you look at verses 22-26, what sticks out to you about the manner in which Jesus heals this man?**

In this instance, Jesus performs the miracle in two parts. This wouldn't have been a necessity for Jesus, so what can the reasoning be? One interpretation sees the first touch as healing the sight and the second touch as healing the understanding. **How do you think we can apply this truth to spiritual blindness?**

The two stages of healing show that healing of spiritual blindness is progressive, not immediate. **What does this mean for us as we approach Jesus?**

When we approach Jesus, there must be a willingness to admit our own weaknesses.

After we encounter Jesus, we must experience a newness of sight. When we discover the gospel, we cannot walk away unchanged. We cannot only see the truth; we must experience it.

As we approach the end of the second part of our study of the gospel of Mark, take some time to consider your own relationship with Christ. What is your level of spiritual blindness?

How will you approach Jesus to rectify it?



Processes can be frustrating, but they can also help us appreciate the finished product even more! In this healing account Jesus uses two methods and takes two attempts to heal the man. What this account does is act as a living parable, it contrasts the failure of Israel' leaders to 'see' and 'hear' and explains the disciples' faith and understanding as being a process.

Read Mark 8:22-26

Chew

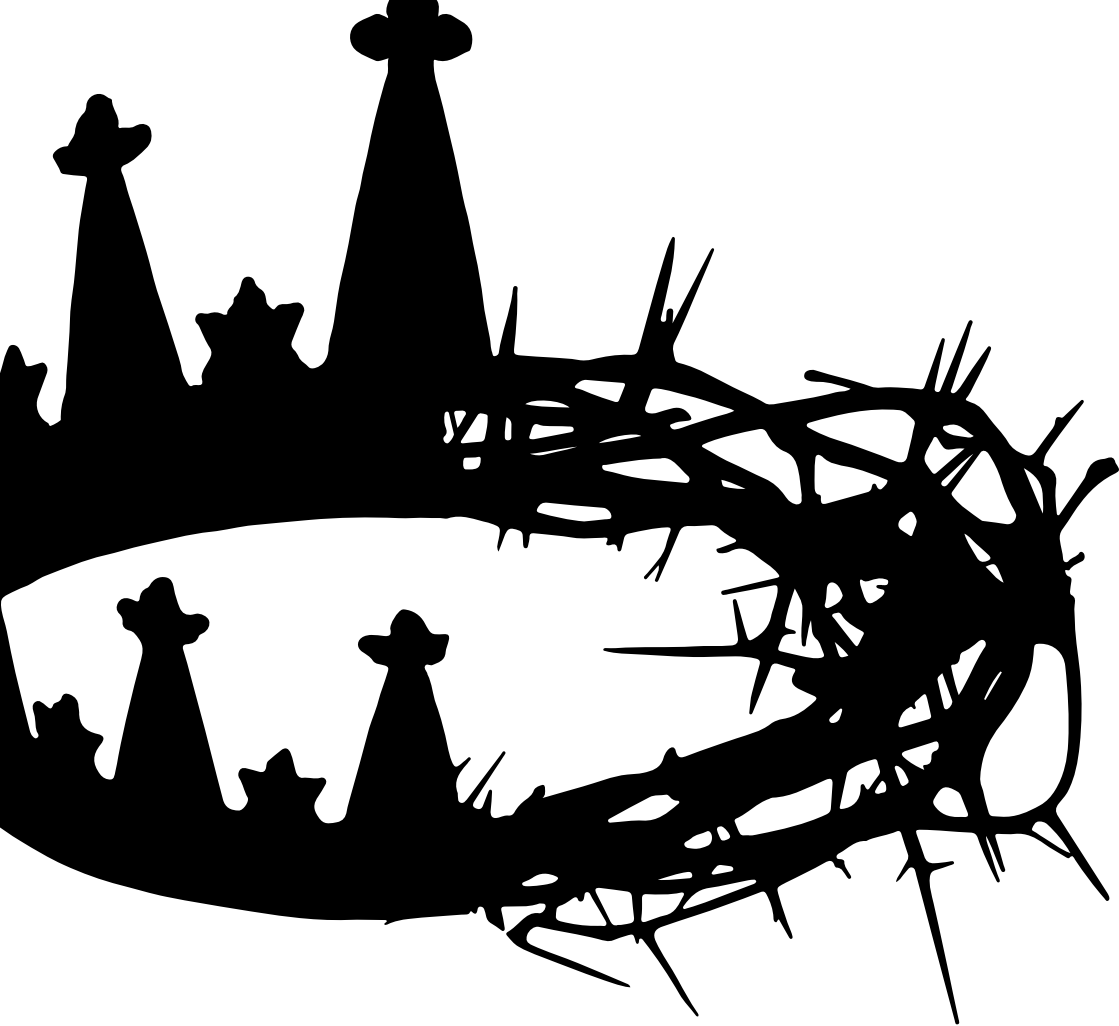
- Why would Jesus need two attempts to heal someone?
- Read Leviticus 15:8. What did Jesus' do by choosing these methods of healing do to the man?

Taste

- Consider how the gospel has been gradually revealed to you over time.
- How can this help you to have greater compassion for those you disciple?
- How has faith been a process in your life?

Digest

- Spend some time praying for those who need more time to understand the gospel.
- Spend some time praising God for his patience with you and those who have invested in your faith journey.



Week 16: 25 June - 2 July

MARK 8:27-9:13

As we prepare to end this section of our journey through Mark, the book takes a dramatic turn. In verses 27-30, we see the first section of the book of Mark come to a close with Jesus asking a very interesting question, "who do people say I am?"

When Jesus asks this question, He points out just how different Christianity is to other world religions. All other world religions focus on behaviour adaptation, whereas Christianity focuses on the person of Jesus Christ. **Why do you think this is important?**

The answer that Peter gives in verse 29 is more insightful than we might realise at first glance. Peter has a divine revelation that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, which almost everyone else was missing! **Take a look at the parallel passage in Matthew 16:13-20, paying special attention to Jesus' response to Peter in verse 17.**

With verse 30 this first section of Mark comes to an end. Here Jesus has performed miracles and deeds that displayed His power, dignity, and divinity. **What do you think the disciples were expecting would come next?**

In verse 31 then, Jesus shifts gears and begins to explain what He came to do. However, it is drastically different from what they most likely would have been expecting. **What does Jesus say He came to do?**

In verses 34-37, Jesus' followers hear clearly for the first time what it will take to truly be a follower of Christ. **They would have to do exactly what Jesus was going to do, and what we will have to do: Take up our cross, leave our own way behind, and give up our lives for the cause of the gospel.**



Have you ever mistaken the identity of someone? Or even thought something about someone only to find out later that it was incorrect? There is a great deal of confusion surrounding the identity of Jesus, including who He is and what He came to do. Even Peter's correct confession is undone in the follow passage when he completely misunderstands what Jesus came to do. In our day many profess to believe in one of the many versions Jesus, but little will have any idea of who He really is or what He came to do.

Read Mark 8:27-30

Chew

- Why would people mistake Jesus for John the Baptist?
- Why would people mistake Jesus for Elijah?
- What does it mean for Peter to give this answer?

Taste

- Who do you think Jesus is?
- Has this changed at all overtime?
- Did you ever believe false ideas about Jesus?
- When you consider who Jesus really is are you guilty of unbelief? Why?

Digest

- Spend some time praying that Jesus would reveal more of himself to you.
