



## Gospel of Mark

### Winter Bible Study 2018

6:00 pm – 7:10

Wednesday Evenings:

January 10, 17, 24, 31 and February 7

*Led by Pastor Peter and Pastor Stephanie*



Central Lutheran  
MINNEAPOLIS

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## **Wednesday, January 10 Class**

### **Welcome**

Welcome to the study of the Gospel of Mark. Over the next weeks we will study this first Gospel, with all its energy and wonder. This booklet will be our guide. At each class, the leader will share some additional highlights, and you will have a chance to ask questions based on the devotional reading.

As with all the Bible study, always come to class. You may be able to finish all the reading, discuss all the questions and do all the home work, or your schedule may not allow for any additional work between sessions. What matters is that you are here, and jumping in to the study of scripture – and that is what is most important.

### **The Study of Scripture – Listening for God**

Some of you are Bible study veterans; others may be new to this Bible study thing. For all of us, the study of the Bible is one of the most important community callings we have as people of faith. Why? Because God speaks to us through scripture, inviting us to grow in faith, hope and love. The invitation is communal – Bible study is a team activity!

The study of scripture is a matter of the heart. Through the study of scripture, we are responding to the great command, to: “love God with heart, soul and mind and love our neighbor as ourselves.” If the study of scripture does not lead us deeper into the loving relationship with Jesus Christ and deeper into the ways we are called to love our neighbor, then why engage in the study of these Holy Scriptures? The pathway for the followers of Jesus Christ is the pathway of daily, deepening love for God and the daily, expanding love for all. After all, remember the song of your youth: “they will know we are Christians by our \_\_\_\_\_.” It is interesting, isn’t it, that the Book of Acts, and so many other passages of scripture, do not teach that they will know we are Christians by our certainty, by our perfect lives, our successes, power or knowledge. It is amazing that we are known by our love for God and one another.

### **Evening Prayer and Christ Care Prayers**

We will begin each week with time for prayer. Here at Central we call them Christ Care, a time when we raise up our joys and sorrows in Christ’s name, looking to God for healing and to one another for care. We will also pause for evening prayer and maybe even a little singing.

### **Class and Reading Schedule (proposed)**

Tonight: Introduction to “The Beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ”

Text: Mark 1:1 and Mark 1: 2-13

January 17: Jesus and the mystery (secret) of God’s kingdom

Text: Mark 1: 14 – Mark 7: 37

January 24: The Jesus language and culture, the secret shared

Text: Mark 8:1 – 10: 52

January 31: Jesus and the approaching Kingdom of God

Text: Mark 11: 1 – 15: 47

February 7: Jesus is before us in Galilee

Text: Mark 16: 1-8 (9-20)

### **A word about the reading of the Gospel – the Good News**

This, the shortest of all four Gospels, can be read in one sitting in about an hour. So, it reads more like a short story than a Tolstoy novel. We usually open to the Gospels with the expectation of *War and Peace*, when all four are very approachable. My hope is that Mark will become your Gospel, a permanent guide and source for your faith – if it isn’t already. As you read the assignments above, you may choose to read the entire Gospel each week, with special emphasis on the lessons highlighted for our discussion. Here are a few notes as you enter the language and culture of the “Beginning of the Good News...”

1. Pay attention to the word “immediately” as you read
2. Watch and highlight all who identify Jesus as the Son of God (contrast that to those who resist the call of the Son of God)
3. Read for geography, especially Galilee as a key reality (more than a place)
4. Slow down as you read Chapter 8:31; 9:31 and 10:31-34 – this is the heart of the Gospel’s message, lived and died for by Jesus Christ.
5. Remember that this is the first “Gospel” written, what is the world view that is continually being created – even for us today, especially for us.

### **The Beginning of the Good News**

So, we better let Mark take over and speak. Open up your Bible to Mark and the first verse, let’s read and discuss these questions:

1. What do you first notice?
2. What is present and what is missing in this first verse?

In Mark’s world, the time is 70 AD, the temple in Jerusalem has just been destroyed by the Romans, the world is ending (all this 30-40 years before John’s inspired telling of Revelation). In the faith community of the day Jew/Jesus follower hybrids through the world was coming to

an end. How do you hear the opening verse in that context? What are the key words to enlighten your faith and awaken your relationship with Jesus?

### **The Prologue as the Table of Contents**

One of my favorite Mark scholars, Fr Eugene LeVerdiere, proposes that Mark 1: 2-13 is like the table of contents for the Gospel. Here is his outline as a guide for our conversation.

**Mark 1:2-3:** The Past Prophetic witness, actually from three Old Testament prophets, Malachi 3:1; Exodus 23: 20; Isaiah 40:3, calls for us to look back upon a God of promise

**Mark 1: 4-8:** John the Baptist appears calling for repentance, a life of reflection upon where we live now – what is language and culture that we succumb to which do not give life?

**Mark 1: (8)-13:** Jesus appears, the future predicted from the past that breaks into our present (how is that for a statement, do you hear it in the text?).

Jesus surrenders to Baptism, is empowered by the Holy Spirit and named beloved by God the Father. From these waters, he is sent into the wilderness, tempted and ministered to by the angels. Now, the Good News begins to unfold...

### **Final thoughts and observations?**

#### **For next week:**

Option 1: Read Mark 1: 14 – Mark 7: 37 at some point between now and next week. You can break it up into a section each day, or read it all in one sitting.

Option 2: Read all of the Gospel of Mark in one sitting, or two chapters a day if you want to break it into a daily reading.

#### **Questions to consider:**

1. What are Jesus' first words? What are his first words spoken directly to someone?
2. Who knows who Jesus is, has the language of Jesus' culture?
3. Words turn to actions, what are the first "signs" of the Kingdom of God?
4. Read slowly at chapter 4: 26-29, 30-32
5. What is the turning point signaled by the closing verse of this section, chapter 7: 36-37

# Wednesday, January 17 Class

## Evening Prayer and Christ Care Prayers

### Class and Reading Schedule

Tonight: Jesus and the mystery (secret) of God's kingdom

Text: Mark 1: 14 – Mark 7: 37

### Beginning Observations

How did the reading go this past week? Did you have the opportunity to reflect on some of the questions?

### Overview of the First 7 Chapters

The two themes that we hope to spend time on tonight, through the lens of the Bible stories in the first 7 chapters of "the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," are the secret and the culture/language of the gospel.

First, the secret is important for our consideration. Something is supposed to be happening to us as readers as we consider the secret in the gospel. For your reading later, take a look at Mark 1:25, 34; 1:43-45; 3:12; 4:10-13; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26; 8:30 and 9:9. All of these passages deal with Jesus holding demons, disciples, recipients of healing and the crowd to a vow of silence or mystery. Why? What is going on? With a person next to you, discuss these warm up questions:

1. What happens when we know a secret?
2. What happens to us as readers of the good news as we hear/read the secret unfold?
3. How does knowing the secret draw us into the language and culture of the gospel?

Second, the culture and language in the gospel centers on two phrases which are important for our discussion: Son of God and Kingdom of God. Once again, turn to a neighbor or cluster of neighbors and discuss these questions:

1. What are the words that you might use to define the Son of God/ the Kingdom of God?
2. What values might you assign to the Son and the Kingdom?
3. What Bible stories that you read in chapters 1-7 illuminate these words and values?

We will return as a group to share our insights.

### Closing Questions and Observations?

**For next week:**

Option 1: Read Text: Mark 8:1 – 10:52 at some point between now and next week. You can break it up into a section each day, or read it all in one sitting.

Option 2: Once again, read all of the Gospel of Mark in one sitting, or two chapters a day if you want to break it into a daily reading.

**Reading Questions for Next Wednesday: Mark 8:1 – 10:52**

1. The center of the story (Jesus) begins to share the spot light with the disciples. How do you define discipleship? What images of discipleship do you see in these chapters?
2. What is the “way of the world,” and what is the “way of the Kingdom of God?” This is a central question, deeply connected to fear. How do you understand fear?
3. What does God will for people? What do we will for ourselves?

## Wednesday, January 24 Class

### Evening Prayer and Christ Care Prayers

#### Class and Reading Schedule

Tonight: The Jesus language and culture, the secret shared

Text: Mark 8:1 – 10: 52

#### Beginning Observations

The center of the story (Jesus) begins to share the spot light with the disciples. How did this past week's reading help you define discipleship? What are your images of discipleship?

As we begin tonight, with a person next to you, fill in these quick warm up statements:

1. A disciple is someone who \_\_\_\_\_.
2. God wills \_\_\_\_\_ for people. People will/ want \_\_\_\_\_ for themselves.

#### An overview of the reading for tonight

David Rhodes, Emeritus Professor of New Testament at LSTC, thinks that these central chapters (Mark 8-10) set up the contrast between two different values, or world views. This contrast will be our challenge and comfort as we grow into the faith that the Holy Spirit speaks to you and me through this good news. As Eugene Boring writes in his commentary on Mark, that this is "good news, not good advice or good principles and insights." (Mark, A Commentary, page 8)

In this contrast, each way of life is motivated by underlying powers. What is the power that motivates what God wills? What is the power that motivates what we want?

Let's take some time to look at these three central passages and talk about what you hear and see. Then, we will close with a conversation on David Rhode's suggestions to:

1. receive the gift of God's rule with all its blessings;
2. see in a new way, and;
3. be empowered to live for the good news.

As you look to next week's reading, one simple question gives us courage: how does Jesus live with God at the center, even in the most difficult of moments, like at Mark 14: 36? Three moments in Mark are central to understanding the good news, the different world view:

Mark 8: 31 Then he began to teach them that the **Son of Man** must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.... 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, He rebuked them. Whoever wishes to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

What do you hear?

Mark 9: 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The **Son of Man** is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 35 He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

What do you hear?

Mark 10: 33 "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the **Son of Man** will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; 34 they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again." 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

What do you hear?

### **Closing thoughts and observations?**

#### **For next week:**

Option 1: Read Text: Mark 11: 1 – 15: 47 at some point between now and next week. You can break it up into a section each day, or read it all in one sitting.

Option 2: Once again, read all of the Gospel of Mark in one sitting, or two chapters a day if you want to break it into a daily reading.

#### **Reading Questions for Next Wednesday: Mark 11: 1 – 15: 47**

1. Where Mark commits 10 chapters to Jesus baptism, temptation and ministry that span a number of years, he has saved 6 chapters for one week in Jesus' life. As Dr. Eugene Boring, a wonderful Gospel of Mark scholar notes, in the first eleven chapters Jesus is reactive in regard to those who oppose him, but now in Jerusalem Jesus takes the initiative. As you read these chapters, do you notice this "shift?"
2. The immediacy of the first chapters also slows, and so do the miracles and other ways we have come to know Jesus. Do you notice this change of pace?
3. Now that you are a disciple in reading, and aware that Mark knows you "know," how does it change your participation in this central part of the Gospel?

# Wednesday, January 31 Class

## Evening Prayer and Christ Care Prayers

### Class and Reading Schedule

Tonight: Jesus and the approaching Kingdom of God

Text: Mark 11: 1 – 15: 47

### Beginning Observations

Last week we discussed the contrast between what God wills for us and what we will/ want for ourselves. This central theme in chapters 8, 9 and 10 challenges and give courage to each of us, often at the same time. The values, language and culture of faith in Jesus do stand in contrast to the values, language and culture of our lives. Even values that we hold as “christian,” thousands of years after Jesus, may in fact be in conflict with the first good news that Mark proclaims.

Before we turn to the events of Holy Week, do you have any thoughts or observations from previous weeks for us to review?

Tonight, we turn to the second half of the good news of Jesus Christ. If it has taken a lifetime for Jesus to move through the first ten chapters in this gospel, it will only take a week for the final six chapters. While “immediately” dominated the beginning, with a bit of a sense of capricious movement; now a careful reading shows specific themes that overlap and reveal in Jesus the very act of following the will of God – even, most specifically, unto death.

We will walk through the cadence of these chapters, pausing along the way for your insights and reflections.

### Holy Week in the Beginning of the Good News

Palm Sunday: Mark 11: 1-11

- Entry into Jerusalem
- Departs to Bethany

Monday: Mark 11: 12 – 19

- Fig Tree
- Cleanses Temple
- Leave the city

Tuesday: Mark 11: 20- 13: 37

- Fig tree, revisited
- Jesus’ authority questioned
- Parable of wicked tenants (Mark 12/ Isaiah 5: 1-7)
- Paying taxes
- Questions about the resurrection
- First Commandment
- David’s Son
- Jesus and the scribes

- Widow's mite (might)
- Destruction of the Temple
- Persecution/ "Little Apocalypse"
- Fig tree, third time
- Watchfulness

Wednesday: Mark 14: 1 – 11

- Plot to kill Jesus
- Anointing at Bethany
- Judas agrees to betray Jesus (Spy Wednesday)

Maundy Thursday: Mark 14: 12 – 72

- Passover
- Last Supper
- Peter's denial foretold
- Gethsemane
- Betrayal and Arrest
- Mark's signature? (14:51-52)
- Jesus before Council
- Peter's denial

Good Friday: Mark 15: 1 – 41

- Jesus before Pilate
- Jesus handed over to be crucified
- Soldiers mock Jesus
- Crucifixion (Mark 15: 21 – 41)
  - o 9:00 a.m. - Nailed to the tree
  - o 12:00 noon – Darkness falls
  - o 3:00 p.m. – Jesus cries, Centurion confesses: Son of God
    - Women noted (verses 40-41)
    - Evening: Burial of Jesus

Holy Saturday (early): Mark 15: 42- 47

- Joseph and the Kingdom of God
- Witnesses to the burial (the Two Marys)

Easter Sunday: Mark 16: 1-18

- Sabbath over – proper burial
- Women flee in fear (final word of the good news?)

### **For Next Week, a Short Read: Mark 16: 1-8**

Only eight verses for next week, but what verses to review. We will also talk about the longer endings you most likely have in your Bibles, and what happens to the tension of the secret when we add the verses. First, think about this one question, from your perspective as the reader who knows the secret: how can the women possibly be afraid? Then, think about this second question: what does it mean for your faith that you can venture an answer to that question?!

Finally, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you, to your family and to our shared culture, to all of us who are so afraid?

# Wednesday, February 7 Class

## Evening Prayer and Christ Care Prayers

### Class and Reading Schedule

Tonight: Jesus is before us in Galilee

Text: Mark 16: 1-8 (9-20)

Do you have any thoughts or comments from previous weeks to discuss before we jump into the conversation tonight?

### Beginning Observations

We will take some time tonight to walk through the 8 verses in Mark 16, pausing for discussion along the way. Then we will move on to the alternate endings and discussion.

Mark 15: 47 – Mark 16: 1

The burial of Jesus is witnessed by the two Marys in 15:47, and then Mark picks them up again in the very next verse, with the addition of Salome. Three things are worth noting:

1. Without verses, how does this read? Why Salome?
2. What do we know that the women do not? (See 14: 3) What does this awaken for us as the readers?

Mark 16: 2

1. What do you hear in the image of the “first day of the week?”
2. If you are into small, but interesting nuances, normally the Greek would read “prote,” first; but, Mark uses “mia,” which is literally one. So, how does it read if we follow it literally: “the day one.” How is this different than “the first day?”

Mark 16: 3-4

1. “Who will roll away the stone?” We know.
2. The stone blocks the entrance – for the Marys (and us), not the exit – for Jesus. The stone is a baptism image in the early Church, blocking the way to be buried with Christ to be raised with him. What are the stones that block you, stones that need to be rolled away? Who does the rolling of these stones?

Mark 16: 5-7

1. The women enter the tomb and see a “young man” (same word as the young man that loses his clothes and runs away naked in the garden). The image is not of an angel, but of one in the tomb, clothed in white (baptismal gown), and sitting on the right (remember James and John?). What do all these images mean, for you? Only in entering the tomb, the place of death, are we united with Jesus for life – clothed in white and sitting on Jesus’ right.
2. The young man’s message is that Jesus is not here, but in Galilee, that he has gone ahead, there you will see him. What do you hear in this?
3. What do you recall of Mark’s use of Galilee?

Mark 16: 8

1. In fear, they flee and say nothing to anyone. Quite simply the question is ours: shall we run away and say nothing to anyone? As participants in the story, drawn in by Mark's telling, do we heed the message: that Jesus goes before us, and we will see Him?
2. Thoughts and observations?

### **Alternate endings**

Mark's abrupt ending forces each follower of Jesus, and each community, to ask why they flee and why they did not say anything to anyone. Facing these questions in ourselves, helps us confront them in the text and in our lives as the followers of the risen Jesus.

In the Greek text, the last words literally read, "they were afraid because or for." Now, in translation we correct the word order to "because or for they were afraid." But Mark ends with the conjunction, "because.... for." Because... what? For... what? What do you hear?

Scholars now almost entirely agree that what follows in verse nine is not Mark. (I find John R. Donahue and Daniel Harrington's Gospel of Mark commentary in the Sacra Pagina series helpful that scholars agree on this point). Simply, it does not fit onto the "because... for." So, two possibilities exist:

1. 9-20 were written and added later to soften the punch of Mark's ending. No one wants to be confronted with their silence and failure to share the "good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."
2. 9-20 were written to replace entirely 15:47 – 16:8, completely changing the ending.

Let's take a look at how these two endings work for you.

1. What happens to you, as the reader, in these two endings?
2. What might the scribes been trying to accomplish?
3. Other thoughts?

As Mark Allan Powell, of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, writes, "true discipleship depends on the adequacy of Christ rather than on the adequacy of the disciples themselves." (Interpretation/October 1993, page 344) For me, this is good news and a place for true beginning. The language and culture is what Jesus gives to us is a gift. We are invited in, rather than having to earn or prove ourselves.

Recall David Rhode's suggestion from a few weeks ago, that when we ponder our discipleship, emerging from the tomb, after we have entered (died and been raised), we:

1. receive the gift of God's rule with all its blessings;
2. see in a new way, and;
3. be empowered to live for the good news.

As we close our holy conversation, for now:

1. What is the gift of God's rule with all its blessings that you receive? How do you describe it?
2. How do you see in a new way, now?
3. How are you empowered to live for the good news?
4. What are the blessings and challenges?

Thank you so much for joining these holy conversations, for your openness to God and the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Next week, Ash Wednesday draws us into the journey of Lent. What is offered in Lent, how about materials for personal devotion, for gathering with others in a small group you form or for gathering here at 6:00 pm for a time of Lenten prayer and holy conversation on the 10 Commandments? That is the plan and invitation for you.