

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
Features/Resources	4
Study 1 :: Mark 9:2-29	6
Study 2 :: Mark 9:30-50	10
Study 3 :: Mark 10:1-12	14
Study 4 :: Mark 10:13-31	18
Study 5 :: Mark 10:32-52	22
Study 6 :: Mark 11:1-11	26
Study 7 :: Mark 11:12-33	30
Study 8 :: Mark 12:1-17	34
Study 9 :: Mark 12:18-44	38
Study 10 :: Mark 13:1-37	42
Study 11 :: Mark 14:1-26	46
Study 12 :: Mark 14:27-52	50
Study 13 :: Mark 14:53-15:15	54
Study 14 :: Mark 15:16-39	58
Study 15 :: Mark 15:40-16:8	62

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

One can't read the gospel of Mark and not notice the incredible speed at which events take place. In fact, one of Mark's most used descriptions of how things are happening is by using the word immediately. People are being drawn to this Jesus. Even if they don't rightly always understand His true identity, they find him compelling, confusing, and challenging. People can't get enough, or at least for awhile. But then this Jesus starts talking about what He came to do ...

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Mark 10:45

Give his life? How could that be? These are more than the questions the people back then pondered, they are the questions we have to wrestle with as well. Because if this Jesus died for us, and we say we're followers of Him, then what does that mean for how we live? Jesus sums this up by saying,

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"

- Mark 8:34-36

It is against this backdrop of who Jesus is and what He accomplished, that we find our calling as His followers, as His disciples. For us as CrossPointe Winter Park to live this out, we are going to need a radically growing worship and affection for Jesus. To find our identity daily in what He accomplished and is accomplishing for us. The more we get that, the more that reality sinks in and saturates us, the more we will be able to deny ourselves and really live for the community. We will find the calling then one of joy and not burden.

So you are invited to take a journey with us to explore this Servant/Savior we get to behold in the gospel of Mark. You will find that the best way to do this is by actively engaging in the full life of CrossPointe Winter Park. To gather on Sunday mornings to celebrate who Jesus is in the larger gathering of the church. To scatter weekly into smaller community groups to work through what has been preached on and to wrestle through the implications on your life. Here you will be known and cared for. Lastly, to not just talk about these things, but to put what you are learning into practice. To consistently serve out in the community. To individually and collectively, exist for the community. It is in this area, CrossPointe Winter Park, that we need to grow the most. This will be frightening and invigorating at the same time.

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

Will you join us in regularly, intentionally praying for the following objectives. Though some of these could look like simple “number” goals, we need to see them as something much, much more. These goals represent REAL PEOPLE, with REAL STORIES. People both inside and outside of the church who need Jesus to radically transform their lives.

To Celebrate from Fall 2011 ::

- Grew from averaging 125 in attendance to averaging 150 in attendance on Sunday
- Baptized 4 people this fall
- Had largest Sunday morning gathering ever (including Easter) of 180 people
- Jeremy and Shannon Absher beginning a Church Planting Internship
- Increased Congregational Giving to be self-sustaining and in the black at year’s end
- Starting 2 new community groups in January
- Started a 2nd and 3rd grade class in CrossPointe Kids
- Sunrise Stories happened every Tuesday and Thursday morning at Dover Shores
- Mentoring program established at the BETA Center through CrossPointe
- \$1000 in gift cards given to the BETA Center and Dover Shores for Christmas

OBJECTIVES for Spring 2012

- Replanting CrossPointe Winter Park January 2012 with core group of 150
- Continue SERVANT/SAVIOR series looking at what Jesus came to do
- 200 people this Spring gathering on Sunday mornings for our Celebration Service
- 250 people at our Easter Celebration Service
- Max out YMCA by the end of Spring
- 20 baptisms by Easter
- Consistent growth in age groups for CrossPointe KIDS
- Corporate Prayer Guide / Increased involvement in Sunday morning prayer gathering
- Begin praying and planning for 2 services for Fall 2012
- Bring Zach Simons on full-time by Summer 2012
- Increased Congregational Giving
- Increased number of people/groups involved serving at Dover Shores and Beta Center
- Begin on-going Community Group Leader training rhythm
- Multiply 2 Community Groups over the Spring
- Increased use and engagement on the City
- Men’s and women’s Redemption Groups this Spring

Remember in all of this, it’s GOD’S MISSION, but WE GET TO PARTICIPATE. God desires to USE YOU to fulfill His purposes. Through the power of the Gospel we get to point our community to Jesus.

For the Glory of God and Your Joy,

the Elders of CrossPointe Winter Park

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

Features



INTRODUCTION

Each session begins with a brief article designed to point you in the direction the session will lead you. Read the scripture reference found near the top of the page and the article. Then pray that God will use His Word to transform your faith as you move through the rest of the session.



OPENING QUESTION

This study was written with the Connection environment in mind. The Relationship Builder will help move you and your group into greater familiarity with one another and toward growth in your relationships. Relationships are vital to our ongoing spiritual growth and development.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The questions are designed with the purpose of moving you deeper into God's Word through one another's personal insights and to a place of personal application which will ultimately lead to the transformation.



PRAYER

Prayer precedes life change. We can be a part of a community group and read God's Word but prayer is what taps the power necessary to actually be changed by it all.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Something powerful happens when we hide God's Word in our hearts and minds. Each session will highlight one verse.

Recommended Resources



ESV Study Bible, Crossway Books



The King's Cross, Tim Keller

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Study One

Read :: Mark 9:2-29

Opening Question :: Talk about an experience where you 'saw' something that shaped you.

Introduction

"We saw that the very minute Peter confessed that Jesus was the Messiah (8:29), Jesus immediately began to teach, "Yes, but I am the Messiah who has come to be murdered." Peter rebukes him (8:31-32), so it is clear that only relentless teaching on Jesus' part is going to make any "dent" in the prejudices of the disciples. Now we are in the second half of Mark, and the contrast with the first half is already evident. Jesus now constantly speaks of his death and suffering, and he does it in ways that the disciples find extremely hard to swallow. This passage begins to answer the questions about the nature of Christ's life and the reasons that the Messiah has to die. Jesus was transfigured "before them" (verse 2) meaning that the "Transfiguration" was for his disciples' benefit, designed to teach them about his person and work. Therefore, we have to ask "what does the transfiguration teach us?"
—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage reveal about who God is and what He is doing?

2. In what ways do you resonate with the father who says, 'I believe, help my unbelief.' (vs. 23-24)? Where do you have unbelief about Jesus, His goodness and His purposes for your life?

growing in community

1. What is the importance of the church community to be centered on Jesus? How do the people in each account respond to Jesus revealing himself (5-13, 14-29)?

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growing in gospel community, for the community

2. What is the importance of being a community that 'listens to Him' (7-8)? Where do you have trouble listening to and believing the Gospel?

for the community

1. What does the boy with the unclean spirit reveal about the world we live in? How does Jesus engage it? What are the issues with how his followers engaged it (19, 23, 29)?

2. In what ways are you/can you pray for God's will and purposes to be done on 'earth as it is in heaven'? What can you learn from this passage on how to flesh out God's will daily?

Connecting Questions

1. In what ways does this passage reveal a bigger and more powerful picture of Jesus than you currently have?

2. How can this passage encourage your belief in Jesus and need for prayer and dependence on Him? How can that effect how you live day to day?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” Mark 9:7

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notes | questions | reflections

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Study Two

Read :: Mark 9:30-50

Opening Question ::What is something you desired (or desire) to be great at?

Introduction

"Jesus has begun to tell the disciples that he is the Messiah, but he has come to be rejected and die. He repeats this here in 9:31. The first reaction of his followers is they simply did not understand what he meant (verse 32a). It didn't fit their categories, so it did not "register." Imagine that you are on a campaign team trying to get a man elected president. One day he says, "Listen, here's how the campaign will end. Not only will I lose the election, but the opposition is going to assassinate me." Surely his followers would think he was being sarcastic or trying to motivate them to work harder. We can imagine, then, why they were so confused! But we see another reaction as well. Fear. They don't want to admit how confused they are (verse 32b – "they were afraid to ask him about it.") They were afraid that he might be serious. Their fear and pride kept them from admitting how confused and scared the teaching made them feel. As a result, in the last part of the book of Mark we see Jesus spending a lot more time with disciples, in order to enlighten them. (Verse 30 – "Jesus didn't want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples.") He enters a phase in which he puts much more into the intensive training of his disciples in the meaning of his death and resurrection (i.e. the gospel)."
–Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage teach us about God and His Kingdom?

2. Why did Jesus have to come, live, die and resurrect? In what ways do you resonate with the disciples who did not understand why Jesus, God, would be delivered, killed and rise again?

growing in community

1. What pictures/principles does Jesus give for those who are a part of His community (ex. :: 35-37, 39-41, 50)? How do those pictures/principles play out in your life?

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2. What do these passages teach us about how to function in community in light of the Gospel? What are things we see that destroy the community of the church?

for the community

1. What (in this passage) causes the disciples to get off track from Jesus and his mission? What distracts you from Jesus and being about his mission?

2. Some attributes of followers of Jesus are : humble servant (35), helpless like a child (36-37), for Jesus (39), repenting of sin (42), peace with one another (50). Is that the view of the church our culture has (your friends, co-workers, neighbors etc.)? How would having those attributes impact the mission of the church?

Connecting Questions

1. How has this passage helped you grow in your understanding of the Gospel and what biblical community on mission is to look like?

2. In what ways have you sought to build a life about you and make a name for yourself as opposed to a life for Jesus, his purposes and fame? How can you repent?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.” Mark 9:31

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growing in gospel community, for the community

notes | questions | reflections

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

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Study Three

Read :: Mark 10:1-12

Opening Question :: How has marriage played out in your extended family?

Introduction

"The Pharisees ask Jesus "is it lawful to divorce?" As is usually the case, the very way the question is phrased shows a prejudice toward a particular answer. The incontrovertible answer is "yes," because Deuteronomy 24:1ff. says so. But if Jesus had simply answered "yes," he would have affirmed the "liberal" attitude that divorce is perfectly permissible. Many of the Pharisees took this view, and felt free to divorce their wives for any reason whatsoever. Jesus' answer in v. 5 implicitly grants that divorce is God's provision, and therefore he cannot be put strictly into the conservative camp that believes divorce is never allowed or wise. But he immediately adds that divorce is only a tragic concession. He lays down two principles. a) First, he stresses that "at the beginning" God intended marriage to be exclusive and permanent (v. 6). Marriage makes two people "no longer two, but one" and "one flesh" (v. 8) — extremely strong expressions. This is to say that marriage is far more than an association or partnership for common goals. It creates a new unit, emotionally, spiritually, personally, and even physically. The marriage bond changes you permanently and the individual loses a great measure of independence. To make it clear, Jesus adds, "let not man separate" (v. 9). This immediately undermines the more "liberal" attitude toward divorce. It must be a dire, last resort. The only way to separate any parts of "one flesh" is through amputation! b) Second, he teaches that while God originally designed marriage to be life long, Moses' permission of divorce was necessary "because your hearts were hard" (v. 5)." —Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage teach us about God and his ways (particularly in marriage)?

2. How has marriage (or not having a marriage) helped you grow in your understanding of the Gospel and reliance on Jesus' life, death and resurrection?

growing in community

1. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. What does marriage teach us about Jesus and the church (community)?

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2. What is challenging (or do you think would be challenging) about marriage (the closest community--see vs. 8)? How does the Gospel shape/allow one to flourish in this relationship?

for the community

1. What are different views of marriage in our culture? In what ways does it align with what Scripture teaches? In what ways does it differ (see quote at top)?

2. What questions do those around you have about marriage and relationships? How can the beautiful picture of marriage Jesus paints bring hope and redemption to those around you?

Connecting Questions

1. What is God teaching you through the idea of marriage? What questions/struggles do you have about marriage?

2. In what ways can God use you to bring redemption to your marriage and/or the marriage of others?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh.” Mark 10:7-8

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growing in gospel community, for the community

notes | questions | reflections

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

Study Four

Read :: Mark 10:13-31

Opening Question :: What is a luxury in your life that would be challenging to give up?

Introduction

"When Jesus invites people into the kingdom, he may emphasize law and grace differently depending on where they are spiritually! Those who are filled with a sense of weakness ("little children") are immediately shown the open arms of Jesus and grace is stressed. Those who are filled with a sense of their own sufficiency and strength ("rich young rulers") are shown the law and its demands are stressed."

—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What do we learn about Jesus and God's Kingdom in this passage?

2. What is Jesus' posture towards those who come to Him? What should your posture be (or not be) when going to Jesus?

growing in community

1. Dwell on differences between a community of people who rely on their own good works for eternal life (10:17, 21) and a community of people who rely on Jesus' good works (life, death, resurrection--the gospel) for eternal life?

2. What is the reward/blessing of following Jesus (27-31)? How have you experienced this?

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for the community

1. What is inviting about the good news of eternal life with Jesus by faith alone in his life, death and resurrection? Challenging?

2. What are things people in your community are relying on to bring life? How can you communicate and show the gospel in a way that reveals true life?

Connecting Questions

1. How is Jesus's teaching in this passage challenging to you personally? Encouraging?

2. Who do you know that is relying on their own good works to gain life? How can you communicate the gospel to them?

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growing in gospel community, for the community

PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: "Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." Mark 10:27

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growing in gospel community, for the community

notes | questions | reflections

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growing in gospel community, for the community

Study Five

Read :: Mark 10:32-52

Opening Question :: When you think of the word “servant”, what person(s) come to mind (family member, friend, co-worker, neighbor)? Why?

Introduction

“We have seen that as soon as Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah the book of Mark shifts its focus from the person of Christ to the work of Christ. Now that we know who he is — what did he come to do? In the passage before us we have Jesus’ third attempt to teach his disciples the meaning of his death. (The first two were in 8:31-32 and 9:31-32.) This time, Jesus gives us more details about his death than previously. But the major advance for the reader is that, for the first time, we are told not just that he will die but why he will do so. Here he begins to explain the meaning and purpose of his death. Many believe that 10:45 is the key verse of the entire gospel, summarizing and combining all the Mark themes about who Jesus is and what he came to do.”—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to do (see quote above)? How does that apply to your life?

2. Based on this passage, how is Servant Savior an appropriate title for Jesus? How does he live that out?

growing in community

1. What does this passage reveal about how Jesus builds his community, how to enter that community and what that community is to be about?

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2. Vs. 32 says those who were following Jesus were 'amazed' and 'afraid'; why? In what ways are you amazed and afraid in following Jesus? Why is it important to be in community?

for the community

1. How does the Gospel motivate and give power to live a life of service? What are tangible ways that you can enter into your neighborhood/workplace/community not to be served but to serve?

2. What is significant about Jesus' willingness to "stop" for the guy that everyone else sees as a nuisance (10:48-49)? Who is a person in your neighborhood/workplace/community that everyone sees as a nuisance and how can you "stop" for them?

Connecting Questions

1. Like James and John, in what ways do you need to repent of using Jesus as a stepping stone to other things (10:35-37) and how can you conform your will to His?

2. What are three tangible ways you follow Jesus and seek to serve and not be served this week?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

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growing in gospel community, for the community

notes | questions | reflections

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Study Six

Read :: Mark 11:1-11

Opening Question :: When you think of a “triumphal entry”, what comes to mind (i.e. bride entering a chapel, football team running through the tunnel)? Describe a situation in which you witnessed a “triumphal entry” with your own eyes.

Introduction

“Chapter 11 really begins the last chapter of Jesus’ life. We notice that in chapter 10 he allows people (like blind Bartimaeus) to call him the Messiah openly. This can mean only one thing — nothing else needs to happen before he is crucified! He knows that an open declaration of his identity will lead to execution, so the countdown begins. Chapters 11 through 15 cover only a week of his life, but it consumes nearly a third of Mark’s gospel. The disproportionate length shows that the gospels are not a biography. These chapters are the climax and fulfillment of Jesus’ ministry, not simply the end of it.”

—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage reveal about Jesus’ identity and power (see also Zechariah 9:9)?

2. What kind of king does the crowd anticipate Jesus to be? In what ways do you misunderstand the identity of Jesus?

growing in community

1. What can you learn about being a follower of Jesus in community from this passage?

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2. Compare and contrast the response to Jesus in this passage and one week later at his crucifixion (14:66-15:41). What can we learn from them?

for the community

1. It would have been easy for the two disciples who were sent to find the colt to consider such a task to be insignificant. Yet, their obedience helped to set the stage for quite a scene. In what ways do you view the mission to which Jesus has called you to be insignificant?

2. How can you point those around you (family members, friends, co-workers, and neighbors) to Jesus as King in your life and the opportunity for Him to be King of their life?

Connecting Questions

1. In what ways do you need to repent of trying to be king of your own life and trust Jesus regardless of your circumstances?

2. What has Jesus called you to in following him? Tangibly, what does that look like in the everyday rhythms of your life?

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growing in gospel community, for the community

PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” Mark 11:9

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growing in gospel community, for the community

notes | questions | reflections

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growing in gospel community, for the community

Study Seven

Read :: Mark 11:12-33

Opening Question ::What are some things that make you angry and why?

Introduction

"The cleansing of the temple (11:15-19) is sandwiched between two halves of the fig tree incident. As we have seen before, when Mark uses such a narrative device, he is relating the two stories and calling attention to some similarity of theme or message. Probably, the temple worship of the day was a perfect example of "leaves without fruit", of form without content. There was lots of ritual observance and activity, but there was no real heart and soul. As we have seen: 1) there was no real concern or compassion for the "unwashed" Gentiles who were without God, and, 2) there was no real concern for true worship and adoration. Another similarity is the note of judgment and severity. Jesus is the humble savior, who comes to save, not destroy. But these incidents give us a warning. If we reject his mercy, there is no other hope. Jesus is a figure of extraordinary love and sympathy, but he cannot be trifled with. A C.S. Lewis' quote applies perfectly here. "He is not a compromise or happy mean between ferocity and meekness, he is fierce to the nth degree and meek to the nth degree."--Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His priorities in this passage?

2. Jesus has the authority to cleanse the temple (v. 15-19). Since we are "temples of God" (1 Cor. 6:19) then Jesus has the authority to turn over tables in our life. What tables has or is Jesus overturning in your life? How has Jesus's cleansing brought you new life?

growing in community

1. What do we learn about the people of God and the place of God in this passage? How can we apply it to our church?

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growing in gospel community, for the community

2. What is the significance of Jesus promises' in verses 22-25 for yourself and your group?

for the community

1. What from this passage can help encourage and equip you and your community to be on mission for the community?

2. **At the temple, we see :** 1) *there was no real concern or compassion for the "unwashed" Gentiles who were without God, and, 2) there was no real concern for true worship and adoration. (quote above). **How does true worship and adoration of Jesus have to result in real concern and compassion for people? How does it apply to your life?***

Connecting Questions

1. Jesus commands "have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). What does this look like in your life? What causes you to lack faith in Jesus?

2. What are the implications of this passage for your life and the church? Why is it significant to encounter and know the presence of Jesus daily to grow in the Gospel?

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God.” Mark 11:22

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growing in gospel community, for the community

notes | questions | reflections

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growing in gospel community, for the community

Study Eight

Read :: Mark 12:1-17

Opening Question :: Share about a time you rejected authority.

Introduction

“Jesus continues throughout this passage to claim absolute, unconditioned authority. He shows that all other human authority must submit to his. a) The authority of religious leaders is conditioned by his. They may try to lead the people of God for their own benefit and to control the public ministry to support themselves. But Jesus alone is head of the church. He can’t be controlled. b) The authority of the state is conditioned by his as well. It may try to overreach itself by demanding that no one sit in judgment over it. But God’s law must stand in judgment over human law. So this means that the Lordship of Jesus is complete over every aspect of our lives — public and private, work and play, thought life and behavior, intellect and feelings, material possessions and spiritual capacities. Everything! To make him Lord is to ask: a) am I obeying him in whatever he has told me in this area, and b) am I thanking him for whatever he has sent me in this area?”—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What do we learn about Jesus and his ways in this passage?

2. What practical implications does this passage have for you and how you respond to God (in what ways have you rejected Jesus, sought to just receive God’s stuff, etc...)? How does the gospel bring hope (see quote above)?

growing in community

1. What is Jesus teaching about God’s people through this parable? What is the warning and how does it apply to you and your community (group, church, etc.) ?

SERVANT/SAVIOR :: The Gospel According to Mark

growing in gospel community, for the community

2. If this parable gives a picture of how *not to respond* to Jesus and his authority--what are ways our community *should* respond to Jesus and what should it be about?

for the community

1. What do we learn about how to (or how not to) respond to the culture around you in this passage? What can we learn about how those outside the church may view and have experienced the church?

2. In the everyday rhythm's of your life, what does it look like to point your community to Jesus through 'rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'?

Connecting Questions

1. How does this passage help you in your understanding of who God is and what Jesus' absolute authority means in your life?

2. What has been challenging for you about these accounts of Jesus? Encouraging?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: "Jesus said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him.'" Mark 12:17

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Study Nine

Read :: Mark 12:18-44

Opening Question :: When was a time you tried to trick someone (did it work)?

Introduction

“This passage continues the series of “hot questions” served up to trap Jesus. He deftly fields these questions like a good infielder handles ground balls — he calmly picks each one up and throws it back! In one instance, he throws it back very hard, and goes on the offensive, totally defeating them. Jesus never dodged the hard questions. Sometimes people in the church brush off difficult inquiries with the response “don’t question, just believe.” Jesus doesn’t do that. It is interesting to notice that Jesus doesn’t simply set up a lecture series and give people information. Rather, his teaching is usually a response to concrete situations and questions. On the other hand, we learn here that asking Jesus a question is very dangerous! He never lets the question remain at the abstract or intellectual level, but gets personal and makes you examine where you stand and to what you are committed.”

—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What do we learn about God and his kingdom in this passage? What is challenging about it and the implications of our calling?

2. How does this passage contrast religious-living (relying on your works) versus gospel-living (relying on Jesus’s works)? How do you error towards religion and where have you seen growth in the gospel?

growing in community

1. What are some attributes of Jesus’s community that are revealed in this passage (what is it to be about, not about, etc)?

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2. In what ways do you 'dispute' with Jesus and others (vs. 28) as opposed to loving and following Jesus and loving others?

for the community

1. The widow's offering reveals that it is not necessarily a set percentage of money that we give that matters, but rather that we give 'everything to Jesus'. What are the implications for giving your time, talent and treasure for Jesus and his mission?

2. Who are your neighbors (near ones) and how can your community seek to love them and be generous toward them? What are specific needs that could be met (financial, social, emotional...)?

Connecting Questions

1. What are specific things that are keeping you from loving God and loving your neighbors? (What can you repent of, What part of the Gospel are you not believing, etc.)

2. What is something that you can daily sacrifice to grow in the gospel and in your relationship with others? What is a need you can sacrificially meet this week?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse(s) :: "Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment great than these.'" Mark 12:29-31

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Study Ten

Read :: Mark 13:1-37

Opening Question :: What is your favorite movie ending where all things were made right?

Introduction

“There is little consensus among Christians with regard to the details of what the Bible teaches about the ‘end times’ (The theological term for this area of inquiry is eschatology). On the one hand, we must remember that the basic teaching of the New Testament on this could not be clearer: Jesus Christ will return visibly and personally at the end of time to judge and renew the whole world. There is very little disagreement about this fact among those who accept the basic trustworthiness of the Bible. Some estimate that almost one quarter of the New Testament is devoted to proclaiming this fact. If you reject the concept of the Second Coming of Christ, you essentially have to reject the reliability of the entire New Testament. Jesus is coming back. But on the other hand, beyond this essential teaching, Christians with very similar commitments and beliefs have not been able to agree on most of the details regarding the Lord’s return.

What does this mean? First, it means we must hold any of our convictions about eschatology with a certain amount of tentativeness and humility. If we hold our views of prophecy and end-times with the same assurance and conviction with which we hold our views of Christ and the Gospel, we are simply giving ourselves too much credit. Second, however, we should not simply avoid any discussion of details. Our views here do have some impact on how we live our lives in the world. Our “eschatology” (as we shall see) can make us either very optimistic or very pessimistic about life in this world, and that affects how we spend our money and our time. Therefore, we should study this subject with humility, but we should study it.”

—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does the picture that Jesus lays forth tell us about Himself and what His Kingdom will accomplish?

2. Why is what this passage teaches important and how should this shape our lives? What hope is there to be found in it (13:10, 11, 13, 20, 26, 27, 31)?

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growing in community

1. In light of this passage, what is the importance of growing in Jesus centered community? What is the significance of knowing and showing his goodness in our weakness and suffering?

2. What are some practical ways that you (and your group) can “be on guard and stay awake” in preparation for Christ’s return (32-37)?

for the community

1. What does this passage teach us about the reason, the result and the power to be on mission with Jesus (particularly 5-13)? How did this flesh out for the disciples? How does it for you?

2. What are some ways that you see brokenness in our community/world (5-8)? How can you enter into it (9-13) yet yearn for the return of Christ (26-28)?

Connecting Questions

1. What strikes you about what Jesus is saying in this passage (what is encouraging, what is difficult for you to believe, submit too, etc.)?

2. Looking at the quote above, how have you taken your beliefs about the end times too seriously or not seriously enough? What does this passage teach and why is it important?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” Mark 13:26

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Study Eleven

Read :: Mark 14:1-26

Opening Question :: What is something material that you have that is extremely valuable to you that would be hard to give up? Why?

Introduction

"This chapter begins the actual "Passion Narrative" of Mark — the actual account of Christ's death. The foreshadowing and explanations are over. Now we watch it happen. "The account of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, condemnation, and execution furnishes a climax to the Gospel and brings together the motifs and themes developed throughout the account. (Lane; The Gospel According to Mark)"

—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage teach us about Jesus and God's Kingdom/purposes?

2. Compare and contrast the accounts of the woman with the expensive perfume and Judas (how they respond to Jesus, etc.)? In what ways do you relate to them in how you value Jesus?

growing in community

1. What can we learn about being a part of Jesus' community from this passage (reclining at the table, Judas betrayal, the passover meal, the Lord's supper, etc.)?

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2. How have others in your community encouraged you to value Jesus more in your life? What impact does this have on your relationship with God and your faith in His goodness?

for the community

1. What is the significance of Jesus being with the disciples and reminding them of the Gospel (life, death being poured out for many and resurrection) before completing his mission and sending them out on mission?

2. How might it benefit the community if you valued Christ as much as the woman with the expensive perfume, ie, what is the impact to others when we personally value Christ above all things?

Connecting Questions

1. What are some take aways for growing in the gospel and living in community on mission from this passage?

2. How have you grown in your own valuing of Jesus through the study of Mark? What things tend to speed this process up and what things tend to slow this process down in your life?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse(s) :: "And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'" Mark 14:22-24

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Study Twelve

Read :: Mark 14:27-52

Opening Question :: Talk about a time when you found it difficult to stand up for something you believed in. What made it difficult?

Introduction

"The next three sections of Mark look at how Jesus suffered at the hands of his friends, enemies, and Father. The titles show us that the suffering of Christ was multi-dimensional — physical, mental, and spiritual. It is necessary to understand the depths of what he endured for us if we are to appreciate the riches of what he procured for us. Secondly it shows us how to face trials in our own life."--Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage reveal Jesus and God's Kingdom/purposes?

2. How does Jesus respond to knowing He is going to be 'struck by the Shepherd' and experience God's wrath (cup) through His death on the Cross? How is that encouraging for you? How does it shape your ability/desire to follow Him?

growing in community

1. How does Jesus say His community will respond to Him and then how do they respond? How can you relate (to Jesus and to the community)?

2. What can we learn from the way Jesus responds to Peter for denying him when those around us disappoint us (see Mark 16:7)? How does it apply to you being a part of the body of Christ?

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for the community

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His mission in this passage?

2. In what areas of seeking to be 'for the community' do you experience a willing spirit but a weak flesh? How can the group encourage you to remain on mission with Jesus rather than growing tired and weary (14:38)?

Connecting Questions

1. In what ways do you relate to those around Jesus in this passage? What causes you to have a greater thankfulness and love for Jesus in this passage?

2. What is currently a source of disappointment for you and where do you feel as though you are a source of disappointment for you someone else? How does belief in the Gospel free you from anger, guilt and shame that might be associated with it?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Mark 14:38

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Study Thirteen

Read :: Mark 14:53-15:15

Opening Question :: Tell of a time when you felt abandoned or wrongfully accused.

Introduction

"If we look, we see the theme all through this passage — Jesus is our substitute. Jesus, an innocent man, is receiving the justice due a guilty man. Jesus, though innocent, is counted "worthy of death" (v. 64), so that we, though guilty, can be acquitted. The blameless is blamed so the blameworthy can go free."

—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What do we learn about God's purpose and Jesus's mission in this passage? What do we learn from how Jesus responds to the accusations?

2. Which character in this account do you most identify with (Pilate, Peter, the crowd, Barabbas, the religious leaders) and why?

growing in community

1. What does this passage teach about the implications of living in community (both with Christians and non-Christians--look at how the communities responded to Jesus)?

2. In this passage we see Jesus denied by his community in order to bring his followers in to community. In what ways do you feel isolated and alone and who is isolated and alone around you? How can Jesus and your community bring encouragement (see also Hebrews 4:14-16)?

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for the community

1. Jesus's claim to be the Son of God in the face of persecution (14:62) is met with public ridicule and denial from his close friends (Peter). What are the implications for you personally and the church community as you seek to be 'for the community'?

2. In what ways does this passage demonstrate justice and injustice? What significance does this have on your life? In the life of our church?

Connecting Questions

1. In what ways have you denied Jesus and joined the crowd who shouted at Jesus "Crucify him!" How can dwelling on the gospel change your desires?

2. What can you personally learn from Peter's response to the situation in 14:68-72 (Read Mark 16:6-7)? What can you learn from Jesus response to Peter and how is it encouraging in following Him?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” Mark 14:62

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Study Fourteen

Read :: Mark 15:16-39

Opening Question :: When have you experienced sacrificial love?

Introduction

"We must remember that Mark always has two reasons for including small details in his narrative. First, anything he writes is included because it happened. Mark is not making this up. Second, however, anything he writes is included in order to teach us about Jesus. Mark is not 'preachy' — he does not do much direct explanation or exposition or moralizing. Rather, he selects facts and events in such a way as to drive home the meaning of the work of Christ. So we should constantly ask: "Why did Mark include that? What is he trying to tell us here?"—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What does this passage teach us about who Jesus is and what He came to do? What does it teach you about his character and his relationship with the Father?

2. Simon of Cyrene was chosen to bear Jesus' cross. Jesus tells us earlier in Mark 8:34-35, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, and for the gospels, will save it." In light of this passage, what does He mean by this and how does that affect the way you live?

growing in community

1. How is Jesus treated by the community He came to love? In what ways have you 'joined the community' who rejected, mocked, and killed Jesus?

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2. As you dwell on who Jesus is and what Jesus does in this passage, brainstorm on what the implications are for your ability to engage in His community (the church)?

for the community

1. What does this passage show you about the world's love for God and God's love for the world? How can that encourage you as you seek to be for the community around you?

2. What is the significance of the confession about Jesus in vs. 39 and that it came from a Roman Centurion? What does this mean for our mission to the world?

Connecting Questions

1. What is your response to Jesus' crucifixion? How does it affect you?

2. How can what you learned in this passage shape who you are and what you do?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

How can you **INTERCEDE** for your city and specific people you know? How can the group intercede for you?

How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” Mark 15:39

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Study Fifteen

Read :: Mark 15:40-16:8

Opening Question :: Speak of a time when you were saddened by a loss but experienced something good come from it.

Introduction

“Other religions are primarily philosophies. That is, they are sets of teaching about how to live. Christianity is primarily an announcement of events in history, things that happened. Those events include the incarnation (God becoming a human being), the crucifixion (the God-man dying in our place), and the resurrection (the God-man breaking death so he can live with us and us with him).

Other religions have accounts of miracles, but they only authenticate or exemplify the founders' teaching. But whether the miracles happened or not does not ultimately make any difference, because it is the following of the teaching that saves us. But in the Christian faith, we are saved by grace, not our performance. We are saved not by what we do but what he has done. Therefore, it is the miraculous events which actually save us. We're saved NOT by the teaching, but by these historical events. Thus, if you take away the historical events of Christ's life and death and resurrection, you take away the heart of Christianity, and it becomes just another life-philosophy that saves you through your own self-effort.”—Mark Study, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC

growing in the gospel

1. What do we learn about the historic truth of Christianity revealed in this passage? How is it different than other philosophies? How does this gospel or good news bring freedom, joy and true worship as opposed to self-effort?

2. The angel said, ‘there you will see him, just as he told you’ (16:7). Where are you/have you experienced the faithfulness of Jesus to do what he promises?

growing in community

1. What do we learn about the community of followers Jesus is building in this passage? What does this show us about the diversity of the church?

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2. How does Joseph and the woman portray faith in Jesus and courage despite bleak circumstances? How does Jesus message to the disciples (16:7) reveal his grace and forgiveness to those who fall short (how is that encouraging to you)?

for the community

1. Talk about the importance of the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus in being 'for the community'. How does this passage prove the gospel to be true?

2. How do Joseph (a pharisee), a women (who were looked down upon during this time) and the centurion (a gentile) show no-one is beyond the power of the gospel? How does that affect how you view those around you (neighbors, friends, family, co-workers, classmates, etc)?

Connecting Questions

1. What areas of your life do you need to courage to believe the gospel promises of Jesus and pursue the kingdom of God? How does this passage give you confidence to do that?

2. Who can you begin to intercede for and invest in that may appear to be beyond the hope of the gospel?

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PRAYER for INTENTIONAL LIVING

In light of this passage, this week ::

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How can you **INVEST** in your community and specific people you know (time, talent, treasure)?

How can you **INVITE** them in to community (church/group) and to Christ (share the gospel)?

Prayer Requests ::

Memory Verse :: “And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.” Mark 16:6

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