



**LIKE HE  
OWNS  
THE PLACE**

**SEVEN STUDIES IN MARK 1-4**



LIKE HE OWNS THE PLACE

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# LIKE HE OWNS THE PLACE

## ENCOUNTERING THE REAL JESUS IN MARK 1-4

- 'Jesus was a great moral teacher'
- 'Jesus didn't care about people's so-called morality, he accepted everyone'
- 'Jesus founded the Christian church'
- 'Jesus would hate what the Christian church has become'
- 'Jesus had great respect for the traditions of his Jewish people'
- 'Jesus was a subversive rebel, ultimately an outcast from his people'
- 'Jesus was kind and generous'
- 'Jesus wasn't the nice guy people think he was'

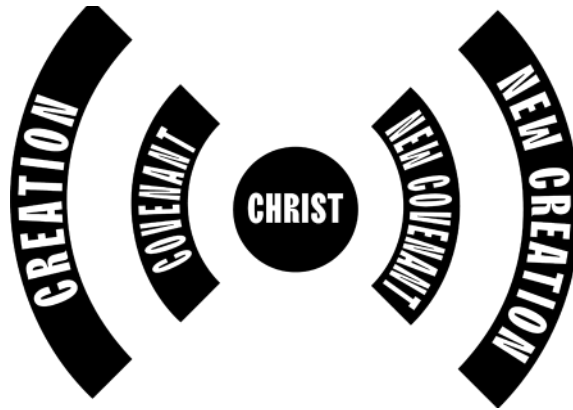
This is just a sample of the different ways people view Jesus, and even here the range is astounding! Maybe that's because, as contradictory as the above statements might sound, there may actually be some truth in each of them.

To meet the *real* Jesus, we're turning to probably the earliest written account of his life, Mark's Gospel. From what we can tell, Mark wrote in the early 60s AD, 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. His primary source seems to have been the eyewitness memories of Peter, one of Jesus' closest disciples and a leader of the early church. One reason we can have confidence in what Mark wrote about Jesus is that most of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' life were still alive. Even if Mark had wanted to fabricate lots of fantastic stories, he couldn't have got away with it, he'd have been called out!

In contrast to John's Gospel, Mark doesn't start by telling us explicitly that Jesus is God become human. In contrast to Mathew's and Luke's Gospels, Mark doesn't start by telling us that Jesus was conceived by God's own Spirit, not by a human father. Instead, he jumps straight into presenting the striking actions of Jesus.

Some readers have therefore thought that Mark presents a 'lower' view of Jesus, as less than divine. But that's a mistake. Mark certainly presents the actions of Jesus without much explicit interpretation from Mark himself. But Mark tells the story of Jesus in a way that strongly alludes to parts of the Old Testament. That's how he helps us make sense of Jesus' actions.

Early this year (<https://mpc.org.au/gods-story>) we looked at how the whole Bible makes sense as one big story in 5 Episodes:



As Mark effectively narrates Episode 3, it shouldn't surprise us that he leans heavily on Episode 2 to help us make sense of Jesus. When we pay attention to how Mark is using the Old Testament - a major focus of this series - we'll discover a Jesus whose identity and authority is actually confronting. Jesus acts 'like he owns the place'... because he really does.

Let's pray that, whether we're new to church or have been part of it for decades, that we'd each gain new insight into Jesus from Mark... and that we'd be drawn to respond appropriately.

Pete Kutuzov  
Jeremy Wales  
Doug Wannenburg  
Dan Wilton  
Phil Campbell  
*September 2020*

A grand theater stage with red curtains and a wooden floor. The stage is empty, and the curtains are drawn. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the curtains and the wood of the stage.

WEEK ONE

MARK 1:1-15

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# THE SHOW IS STARTING!

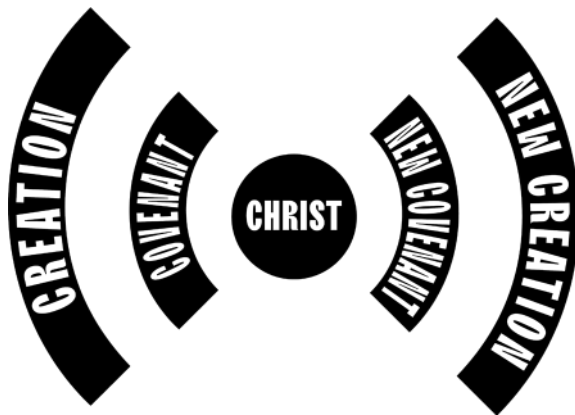
Jesus of Nazareth never held a political office, never wrote a book, never married, never attended university, and never visited a big city (even Jerusalem was only big at festival times). He was a lower-class worker who died homeless and poor. Yet, in spite of all odds - obscurity, powerlessness, and execution - he's arguably the most famous person in all of human history. Why? What makes Jesus one of the most recognised and influential people in all of history?

1. What opinions do your friends hold about Jesus?  
How does the media portray Jesus?

*In the midst of so many opinions about Jesus, we're turning to one of the biographies of Jesus' life known as the Gospel of Mark, to see who Jesus really is. The Gospel of Mark is one of the earliest accounts of Jesus' life, and was most likely written while many of those who were witnesses to the events described were still alive...*

**READ MARK 1:1-15**

From the very beginning of this Gospel, Mark makes it clear who this book is about: Jesus. Mark is equally upfront that he thinks the life of Jesus is very good news - "gospel". But why?



Earlier this year we looked at how the whole Bible works as God's Story in 5 Episodes. Mark is telling Episode 3 and he picks up where Episodes 1 & 2 left off. The first thing Mark tells us about the story of Jesus is that it continues the story of the Old Testament: "as it is written..." (1:2-3). Here Mark merges quotes from two related Old Testament prophets which **we should read together (over the page)**:

**MESSIAH, SON OF GOD**

Why does Mark start by calling Jesus "the Messiah, the Son of God"? God made Adam, the first human, to represent God on earth as God's "image" (Genesis 1:26-28, 5:1-3) and so Adam was called "the son of God" (Luke 3:38). But Adam disobeyed and failed to faithfully represent God. God later called Israel to be his "son" (Hosea 11:1) - they're even called God's "firstborn" (Exodus 4:22-23). But Israel also failed to live up to the title and role. Israel's kings in the line of David were meant to lead the nation in obeying God, so they too were called God's "son" and "firstborn" (2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 2:7, 89:26-27). Yet ultimately these kings led Israel into idolatry and exile instead. Since each Davidic king was 'crowned' by anointing with oil, the Hebrew and Greek words for 'anointed' - "Messiah" and "Christ" - were the title given the longed-for king who might **one day represent God truly**. Mark starts by saying that Jesus is that longed-for "Messiah, Son of God" who would indeed represent God truly (Mark 1:1 & 1:11). But this raises the question: What makes Jesus so special that he can fulfill that role, when Adam, Israel and the Davidic kings could not?

## ISAIAH

*Addressing those in exile, Israel's largest punishment for sin.*

40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

**3 A voice of one calling:**

**“In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

5 And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

## MALACHI

*Addressing the people after exile, when Israel had gone back to sinning again.*

2:17 You have wearied the LORD with your words.

“How have we wearied him?” you ask. By saying, “All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”

3:1 **“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.** Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. ...

4:5 “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”

**2. Both Isaiah and Malachi looked for God himself to arrive and put things right, with someone to prepare God's way beforehand. For Isaiah, how would God's arrival be good news?**

**3. For Malachi, would God's arrival really be good news? Why or why not?**

**4. Malachi looked for another 'Elijah' figure to come before God came to judge, since Elijah famously confronted disloyalty to God in Israel. John the Baptist deliberately wears the same distinctive clothing as Elijah (compare Mark 1:6 with 2 Kings 1:8). What does that say about John's role? How does his preaching and baptising fit into that role?**

**5. If John fills the 'prepare-the-way-for-God' role from Isaiah and Malachi, what role does Jesus fill? (verses 7-9) What does this say about who Jesus really is?**



6. What three events happen as Jesus is baptised? (verses 10-11)? What do these say about who Jesus is and what he came to do? (see sidebar for Old Testament hints)

7. Verse 15 summarises the message of Jesus. What do you think he means when he tells everyone: “The time has come: the reign/kingdom of God has come near”?

8. What do you think Jesus means when he tells everyone: “Turn and trust the good news”? What is he telling people to trust in? What do people need to turn from trusting instead? What will happen if they don’t turn?

*As Mark says in verses 1 and 14, the life and message of Jesus is very good news. But it also has an edge to it – it calls for repentance (Mark 1:4; 1:15). How people respond to it determines whether it really is good news for them, or hard news they don’t want to hear.*

9. If someone asked you “Who is Jesus?”, how would you reply? How does this study affect your answer?

10. If Jesus is who Mark says he is, do you give Jesus the respect he deserves? What would appropriate respect for Jesus look like in your life?

*The opening of Mark is jam-packed with Old Testament imagery because Mark doesn’t want us to miss the significance of this moment. The climax of all of history has come: not just the rightful king of Israel but the God of all creation has arrived! The question is: How will Israel respond? How will we? Let’s pray that we would respond appropriately as we encounter Jesus in Mark.*

PSALM 2

*[said by the Davidic king]*

7 I will proclaim the LORD’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father.<sup>8</sup> Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.”

ISAIAH 42

*[said by God]*

1 “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.”

ISAIAH 64

*[said to God]*

1 “Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down!”



WEEK TWO

MARK 1:16-45

# ON GOOD AUTHORITY

Jesus announced to everyone he met: “the reign of God has come near!” Why? Because Jesus himself was God living among us. Jesus himself embodies the reign of God. Now, if we see God’s reign as bringing justice and goodness, that’s great news! But that’s not how everyone sees it. Lots of people would prefer to be the masters of their own lives, not under the authority of Jesus...

1. Consider those who have authority over you in your life – bosses, governments, teachers, parents. Is your response to authority usually positive or negative? Why?

***READ MARK 1:14-34***

2. Do you notice any themes that run throughout this passage?

3. Why do you think Simon, Andrew, James and John respond so quickly and decisively to Jesus?

- What does this tell us about Jesus?

4. What are the ramifications for the disciple's lives when they take up Jesus' command to "Follow me!"?

- Do these seem reasonable things to ask of people? Why or why not?

5. In verses 21-22 and 27, attention is given to the manner of Jesus' teaching. What is Mark trying to tell us about Jesus?

- What effect do you think Mark means to have on us?

## LIKE HE OWNS THE PLACE

6. In verses 29-34, what is Mark teaching us about Jesus?

- How does Simon's mother-in-law react to being healed?
- What does this tell us about Jesus' call on our lives?

*Apparently, Jesus wouldn't allow the demons to speak because they knew who he was (1:24-25 & 35). But why wouldn't Jesus want people to know who he was? Maybe because they'd make the wrong inference about why he had come...*

## **READ MARK 1:35-45**

7. How does Jesus react to Simon's plea, "Everyone is looking for you!"?

- Why do you suppose Jesus reacts like this?
- What do we learn about Jesus' character, priorities and purposes?

8. What does the healing of the leper reveal about Jesus?

- What was intended by Jesus' specific instructions?
- What was the result of the leper's actions and what does it teach us?

*Jesus wouldn't allow demons to disobey him. But he does allow people like the leper to disrespect his authority. At least in this life, it's up to us how we respond.*

9. In which areas of your life and thought are you reluctant to submit to the authority of Jesus? Why is that?

10. Is Jesus someone whose authority you can trust and submit to? Why or why not?

- Has this study affected your answer? How so?

*Jesus is someone whose authority is real whether we trust him and submit to him or not. He is the human embodiment of God's own reign over all the universe. But fortunately we can trust him, since he uses his authority not to serve himself but to save us! As Mark's story goes on, ultimately we see Jesus dying on the cross to save us from our sins. His authority is good authority. Let's pray we can trust Jesus enough to obey him in everything.*

WEEK THREE

MARK 2:1-17

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# BIGGER THAN YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM

Everyone's got their own take on the world. How are we going to make things better? Do I need to make my bed each morning and sort my own life out? Or should I be out protesting for the rights of the vulnerable?

Jesus doesn't directly comment on these, so we have to be careful extrapolating to ourselves. But this week, Jesus starts to stake his claim not only for what's wrong with the world, but also what will make it right again.



*This week, Jesus returns 'home' to Capernaum. And word gets out. Jesus is getting popular. But with popularity comes controversy. Or at least, with Jesus it does.*

**READ MARK 2:1-12**

1. What seems to motivate the paralytic man and his friends?
2. Imagine being the paralytic man when Jesus said, "Child, your sins are forgiven." How would you feel?
3. Look at what the law teachers say in verses 6-7. Do they have a point?
4. What reason does Jesus give for healing the paralytic man?
5. What does Jesus think is the man's greatest need? How do you know?

*This passage reveals some very different beliefs to those of 2020 Australia. The people of Jesus' day had a sense that God, and only God, had authority to judge people based on their conduct. And that he would.*

*And they had developed their systems for dealing with this, for controlling their fate with God: the rules and traditions of the elders. So when Jesus claimed the authority on earth to forgive sins, he had completely stepped outside the way that they'd constructed to handle their world!*

**TAX COLLECTORS  
AND SINNERS**

When Israel was under Roman imperial rule, Rome demanded taxes, and certain Israelites volunteered to collect those taxes from their fellow Israelites. The perk was that they could collect more than Rome was asking, skim the excess and make themselves rich. The downside was that their fellow Israelites despised them for being national traitors and financial cheats. They were therefore counted in the class of “sinners”, people who openly lived a life of sin like e.g. prostitutes. Maybe a close-ish parallel to “tax collectors and sinners” for us would be “known criminals”, outcasts from decent society, people you really wouldn’t want to be seen with.

***READ MARK 2:13-17***

**6. What’s controversial about Jesus’ choices in this section?**

**7. What’s the point of Jesus’ explanation in verse 17?**

**8. How does it seem the Pharisees chose their disciples?**

- **How do people in our world choose their proteges?**

- **How do we choose who we hang out with?**



*Jesus is upsetting the apple cart here in more ways than one...*

**9. Are there other things in your life that are more important to you than being forgiven by God?**

- How do your choices reflect this?

**10. Do you ever try to sort things out between you and God aside from trusting Jesus' authority to forgive your sins? Maybe bargaining with God? Trying to be a better person?**

- When was the last time that you went to Jesus directly to confess specific sins and ask him for forgiveness?

*So many other things can seem important in life: getting the kids to school, paying the bills, passing your exams... And some of them really ARE important! Yet here Jesus makes sure we don't miss what's MOST important: that we're right with God, that our sins are forgiven.*

*Spend some time appropriately (in threes, pairs or even on your own) confessing your sins to almighty God, asking for Jesus to forgive you and pray with great thanks and joy that he has the authority to wipe your slate completely clean.*

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a wooden chess piece, likely a king or queen, over a chessboard. The hand is positioned in the upper right, with the thumb and index finger gripping the piece. The chessboard is visible in the lower half, with several other pieces scattered around. The lighting is warm and focused on the hand and the piece being held.

WEEK FOUR

MARK 2:18-3:6

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# LIKE THEY OWN THE PLACE

In spite of the great things Jesus is doing, it seems in the eyes of the Pharisees - the respected Jewish religious leaders - he can't put a foot right! The Pharisees believed that all Israel's problems would be solved if they sternly stuck to the rules of the Old Testament Law - and added a few new ones themselves. But Jesus seems to take a different approach.

***READ MARK 2:18-3:6***

1. What are people criticising and questioning about Jesus?
  - What common thread do you see in their attitude?
  
2. What do you think Jesus means when he calls himself the “bridegroom”?
  - When is the time for fasting that he refers to? (Should followers of Jesus fast now?)
  
3. Torn shirts and burst wine skins... What do you think Jesus is talking about in verses 21 and 22, and how does it connect with the rest of the conversation?
  
4. Jesus is challenged about picking heads of grain with his disciples on the Sabbath day. They're harvesting! What's the significance of the passage he uses in his reply?

5. In 3:1-6 Jesus is challenged for doing the work of healing on the Sabbath. How are the words of his question in verse 4 reflected in the reality of verse 6?

- Who's the real sinner here?

DANIEL 7

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9 As I looked,  
thrones were set in place,  
and the Ancient of Days took his  
seat.  
His clothing was as white as snow;  
the hair of his head was white like  
wool.  
His throne was flaming with fire,  
and its wheels were all ablaze. ...

13 In my vision at night I looked, and  
there before me was one like a **son  
of man**, coming with the clouds of  
heaven. He approached the Ancient  
of Days and was led into his presence.  
<sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and  
sovereign power; all nations and  
peoples of every language worshiped  
him. His dominion is an everlasting  
dominion that will not pass away, and  
his kingdom is one that will never be  
destroyed.

*Jesus moves from identifying himself with “the  
Bridegroom” to “anointed King in waiting” (like David,  
2:25) to “Son of Man” (2:28). Read Daniel’s vision in  
Daniel 7 (sidebar) for background on The Son of Man.*

6. What has this unmasked about the real identity of  
Jesus?

*Once again, Jesus is walking around as if he owns the  
place! He owns the Sabbath, he is master of feasting and  
fasting, and can heal as and when he wants. And for  
that, he meets a wall of rejection. So how will we respond  
to the claims of Jesus?*

7. Jesus claimed to be God himself come to save us from our sins, because we couldn't save ourselves. Why is this offensive to so many people, not just the Pharisees?

- Is it a claim you find difficult yourself? How so?

8. Are there ways you try to add to what Jesus has done to save you?

- Does anything you do make you feel like you're a better person than others?

9. What's an appropriate response to being saved by Jesus?

- What should motivate obedience to his authority now?

*With 2000 years of hindsight, it's easy to look down on the Pharisees for their rejection of Jesus. But what motivated them can also affect us. Isn't it nice to think that our efforts at being good make a difference, that we are at least better than those who don't even try? It can feel insulting to hear that actually Jesus is the one the world really needs, the only one who can save from sin, and that we each need him as desperately as anyone else does. Instead of thinking we're better than the Pharisees, maybe we can at least learn from their mistakes. Let's pray that we can let Jesus be the hero, the one the world was waiting for - because he is - and simply throw ourselves at his feet.*



WEEK FIVE

MARK 3:7-35

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# LIKE HE OWNS... DEMONS AND PEOPLE?

As unclean spirits come into contact with Jesus, they too act like he owns the place. But does Jesus have this power because he's 'in' with God, or because he's 'in' with the devil? The next few incidents in Jesus' ministry force us to face the question of whether Jesus is genuinely the Son of God. In this section Mark constantly makes us ask: Who is really 'in' with who? And also: What happens to those who find themselves standing 'on the outside'?

## **‘With a little help from my friends’**

### ***READ MARK 3:7-19***

1. Jesus is so popular he needs to preach from a boat to have any space (verses 7-9). So Jesus appoints the twelve, to do what exactly? (verse 14-15)

- How does this relate to what Jesus himself was doing?

2. What do you notice about the demons’ interactions with Jesus?

## **But who are his friends?**

*The next section is another ‘Markan sandwich’. You might notice that Mark often starts a story, but then interrupts it with another one. After, he goes back and finishes the first. This pushes us as readers to understand both stories in relation to each other. One story is the ‘meat’ and the other is the ‘bread’.*

### ***READ MARK 3:20-35***

3. In the ‘bread’ story, verses 20-21 and 31-35, who’s ‘on the inside’ with Jesus?

## LIKE HE OWNS THE PLACE

The word translated 'insane' or 'out of his mind' is a euphemism. Literally, it means "he stands outside" [of his mind]. If you look for them, you'll see a lot of wordplays in this chapter of Mark about where people stand with respect to others: inside or outside.

**4. Where does Mark say Jesus' biological family is physically located? Why do you think Mark includes that detail? (Notice the similarity with what they say about Jesus in v21)**

*It seems that Jesus was willing to have his family be upset with him! He seems very aware of an even more primary identity than blood relatives. It's an identity that even the demons recognised. But some people had a very different read on who Jesus was and where his power came from. And that's the 'meat' in our 'sandwich'.*

**5. How do the law teachers interpret Jesus' ministry?**

**6. Why does Jesus say that this doesn't make sense? (verses 23-26)**

**7. What alternative interpretation of his ministry does Jesus offer in verse 27?**

**8. The law teachers have seen the work of the Holy Spirit in liberating people from demonic oppression and they've called that liberation itself evil and demonic. What does Jesus think of their words? (verses 28-29) Do you think he's being too harsh?**



*These law teachers from Jerusalem have seen what Jesus is doing by the power of the Holy Spirit, they've labelled it demonic, and Jesus reveals to them exactly where this means they stand with God. It's a harrowing reality, and Jesus makes sure they're aware of it.*

*The truth is that his ministry in casting out demons is a clear demonstration that he has overpowered the 'strong man' (Satan), and is plundering his house, rescuing people from the darkest of spiritual conditions.*

## **If we're in with Jesus...**

*The 'meat' in the 'sandwich' was primarily concerned with whether Jesus was 'in' with God or with the devil. The 'bread' around the outside, however, focuses us on something that we otherwise might have missed: are we in or out with Jesus?*

9. Jesus came to rescue us from living the way Satan wants us to - without God - and bring us into God's family under the authority of Jesus. How do you feel about him doing that for you? Is it something you welcome, or something you're suspicious of?

10. Sin is a powerful force, and one that remains active in our lives. But do you believe that, in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are able to conquer our sins?

- What spiritual problems do you despair that Jesus could conquer in your life?

11. How might your habits and words change over time if you started to genuinely view all people as equally 'saveable' by God, as you yourself are?

*Encourage each other in Jesus' power over sin, the world and the devil! Even before Jesus broke sin's power at the cross, he was exercising his eternal authority over the spiritual realm, plundering souls from Satan's clutches. Whatever darkness of the soul you experience, Jesus is powerful, and we should not lose hope. Pray for hope, in Christ.*



WEEK SIX

MARK 4:1-34

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# LIKE HE MIGHT NOT OWN THE PLACE?

So far in Mark, we've seen Jesus act like God himself, like God is described in the Old Testament. It's like he owns the place: Israel, demons, even people like us! By this stage in Mark, you might think everyone would acknowledge Jesus as their king. But they don't, especially not the Jewish religious leaders. So why not? What's the problem? Is it something lacking in Jesus himself?

**READ MARK 4:1-25**

1. Look at verses 3, 9, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 23. What's the big thing Jesus tells people to do here?

2. Look at verses 14-20. Why isn't the word of Jesus universally accepted? Does the fault lie in Jesus himself, the word he speaks, or elsewhere?

3. For each response to the word of Jesus in verses 14-20, describe in your own words what that looks like today:

**Where seed fell**

**What that looks like today**

"Along the path"

"Rocky ground"

"Among thorns"

"Good soil"

4. In verses 10-12 Jesus explains why he's now teaching in parables, i.e. riddles. Why does Jesus explain the riddles to his followers but not to anyone else? (see also verses 33-34)

**SO THEY WON'T TURN AND BE FORGIVEN?**

In verse 12 Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. After Israel had rejected many clear calls to turn from their sin and be forgiven (see e.g. Isaiah 1), in 6:9-13 God told Isaiah that now it was too late, punishment had to fall to purify the nation. What followed were several cycles of sin/punishment/persistent-impurity. So Isaiah 53 said that cycle will be broken only once one innocent servant of God one day takes the punishment everyone else deserves. Here in Mark, Israel has heard Jesus speak plainly: "Repent and believe the good news!" (1:15). But the majority has not listened. Starting in Mark 4, Jesus speaks in riddles to prevent them listening, so that ultimately he'll be executed by the nations' leaders, and at the cross the Isaiah 53 punishment would fall on Jesus himself.

5. Look at verse 25. For followers of Jesus, what do they "have" such that they "will be given more"? For people who won't follow Jesus, how is it that "even what they have will be taken away"?

- How is this illustrated by what happens to the different "soils"?

***READ MARK 4:26-34***

6. What do you think is the main point of these two parables, about the slowly growing seed and the tiny mustard seed?

- How could this point relate to the parable of the four soils?

7. Despite acting like he owns the place, like God himself, not everyone listened to Jesus. What range of reactions do you expect if you talk about Jesus?

8. What's the danger in expecting *all positive* reactions?

- What about expecting *all negative* reactions?

9. In practice, how could you find out what kind of "soil" your friends, family, neighbours, workmates are?

10. "Good soil" people believe the word they receive and "multiply" it, passing it on to others, not "hiding their lamp" but "putting it on its stand". Has this passage encouraged you to do that more? How so?

*If Jesus is God himself - the king of God's kingdom - we might expect everyone to simply accept that. If so, we're headed for disappointment! We might want to see God's kingdom explode with growth, but even with Jesus himself the growth was slow. Of course, we mustn't make the opposite mistake either. Jesus really is the king of God's kingdom, so he's not going to suddenly lose his mojo! We're not going to be the last people to accept him. There are many, many more people who don't yet believe in Jesus but who one day will. Our response of gratitude and faithfulness to Jesus is to simply find those who are ready to hear about him. We'll do that by trying to lovingly and respectfully share the truth about Jesus, often throughout a long time of relationship with someone, and seeing what God eventually does with that in their hearts. Let's pray that we would do that and that we'd have the joy of seeing God grow his word in the people we know and love.*



## WEEK SEVEN

MARK 4:35-41

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# LIKE HE OWNS ALL CREATION

Mark's early chapters are really answering the question: "Who is Jesus, really?" Unlike John's Gospel, which starts by answering that explicitly, Mark's Gospel simply shows us the actions of Jesus. When those actions are interpreted in light of Mark's allusions to the Old Testament, a remarkable answer emerges. But for Jesus' first disciples, even after all they've seen up close and personal, it turns out they still have a lot to learn about who Jesus really is...

**READ MARK 4:35-41**

1. The first disciples of Jesus were life-long fishermen on this very same Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:16-20). If they feared for their lives, what kind of storm were they facing?

2. How do the disciples react to Jesus being asleep? (verse 38)

- Can you relate to how the disciples feel? How so?

3. How does Jesus calm the storm? (verse 39)

- Have we seen Jesus acting like this toward anyone or anything else in Mark so far?

**SLEEPING THROUGH THE STORM?**

It might seem bizarre that Jesus is happily snoozing through a ferocious, life-threatening storm! But this detail recalls the story of Jonah. Jonah fled from God on a foreign ship. So God brought judgement on the ship with a storm. Jonah was sleeping, but the sailors woke him, found out he was responsible, threw him overboard, and immediately God calmed the storm. The foreign sailors therefore praised the God of Israel as the Lord of all creation (Jonah 1:9,16). Perhaps we're meant to react the same way to Jesus?

PSALM 107

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1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe...

<sup>23</sup> Some went out on the sea in ships: they were merchants on the mighty waters.

<sup>24</sup> They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep.

<sup>25</sup> For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.

<sup>26</sup> They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away.

<sup>27</sup> They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.

<sup>28</sup> Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.

<sup>29</sup> He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.

<sup>30</sup> They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven.

<sup>31</sup> Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

**4. Read Psalm 107 (sidebar). What similarities do you notice between this Psalm and Mark's story about Jesus?**

**5. The sea-storm rescue in Psalm 107 ends with gladness and thanksgiving. In contrast, how do the disciples react? (verses 40-41) Why would this be?**

**6. Comparing this story about Jesus to both Psalm 107 and Jonah 1 (sidebar on the previous page), what's the answer to the disciples' question in verse 41?**

*Last week we heard Jesus saying that "whoever has will be given more" (4:25). The disciples have Jesus with them, and so they're given more insight into who Jesus really is. Jesus isn't just the rightful king of Israel. He's the king of creation. He's the one who's word even the wind and waves obey. He's God himself, who became human to save us. Let's talk through some of the practical implications of that...*



7. Jesus has owner's rights over all creation, including our very lives. Is that frightening, or reassuring, or both? How so?

8. Even when it seemed Jesus didn't care, the disciples knew he was their only hope. What can we learn from that in our lives?

9. If even the wind and waves obey the word of Jesus, what should be your attitude to his word?

- What will that mean for you in practice?

10. In both Psalm 107 and Jonah 1, the right response to rescue is to thank the God who saved you. If Jesus has rescued you from sin, how could you show appropriate thanks?

*We've come to the end of our series on Mark 1-4. But obviously we haven't come to the end of Mark's Gospel. Hopefully we can continue reading Mark together next year, and like the disciples we may be surprised to learn even more about the real identity and authority of Jesus. What has been the most striking insight into Jesus that you've had from Mark 1-4? Share that with your group. Pray for each other that your knowledge of Jesus would shape your lives, for your good and for God's glory.*







**MITCHELTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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