

## Lesson #1: The Kingdom of God

"The Beginning" — Setting the Stage (Mark 1:1)

An echo of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This story is about God's creation.

### New Creation

We can read in Genesis that Adam and Eve decided to rebel against God and His desires.

This rebellion by mankind is destroying God's creation; this new "beginning" is God's new act to restore and renew broken humanity and his fracturing creation.

### Grace

God's undeserved love. God's act, not man's. It is pure grace that God does not abandon his world but acts to set it right.

### Quick Overview of the Bible

#### Central Theme: God's grace and man's rebellion

- The Fall: Adam and Eve eat the fruit; God announces the consequences but promises a savior, the seed of a woman
- The Flood: God cleanses the earth but preserves Noah
- Abraham: A blessing to many nations, but the Jews see God's favor as only for them
- Exodus: God frees them from slavery and leads them to Promised Land, but they struggle to trust and follow him
- Torah — God's Teaching to guide his people; they're "stiff-necked."

"The Christ" — Israel's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

"The Way" — How We \_\_\_\_\_ Matters

"Baptism" — God's \_\_\_\_\_ Movement

### Means of Grace: What is a sacrament?

It is a \_\_\_\_\_ act. \_\_\_\_\_ by God. That has one or more \_\_\_\_\_ elements. Through which we receive God's \_\_\_\_\_

"Follow Me" — Jesus' Call: Mark 1:16-20

Jesus is calling men and women to \_\_\_\_\_ and help him as God turns the rebellion in the world on its head and establishes his rule of grace and redemption.



At Home: Mark 2-8

Choose at least one chapter to read between Mark Chapters 2 and 8. Read the chapter of your choice and then discuss these questions with a parent/adult. Write down at least two answers to discuss with your small group in Confirmation class.

Pray:

“Father, may your Spirit reveal to me the way of life through your Son Jesus. Teach me what is life and what isn’t. Use these words to guide my steps into repentance and faith. Amen.”

Is there a passage or story that brings you comfort?

Is there a passage or story that brings you discomfort?

With what do you resonate and feel excitement?

With what do you struggle to understand or question?

## Lesson #2: The Kingdom of God is at Hand

**Reactions to the Reading:** In your small groups, discuss your reactions to the chapter you chose for the week.

**Exorcisms:** Two major exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark:

1. In the holy place (the synagogue), on the holy day (the sabbath), against the holy teachers (the scribes) (Mark 1:21-28).
2. In Roman territory against "Legion," which is the name of the fundamental unit of the Roman military (Mark 5:1-20).

Exorcisms point to the reality that God is \_\_\_\_\_ the powers and authorities who would pretend to rule his world through human rebellion against God.

**Healings:** Through his healing ministry Jesus is setting the world right.

Healings have three functions:

1. Bring in \_\_\_\_\_
2. Fix the brokenness of the creation.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ people to be who they were created to be.

**Conflict with the Old:** Jesus is in conflict with the world that is in rebellion against God and thus those mired in rebellion see him as a real threat to their existence.

Jesus had conflict with two groups of people:

- 1.
- 2.

**Building of the New Community:** Jesus responds to his conflict with the old ways of the world by creating an alternative community and way of life.

Three Ways Jesus Builds Community

1. \_\_\_\_\_ together "twelve" (for the twelve tribes of Israel) to represent the formation of a new Israel.
2. Teaching them a new way of life.
3. Send them out to live and proclaim that way of life.

**Parables:** Strangely, Jesus teaches in parables in order to further harden the hearts of his listeners, but to those who have left everything to follow him he explains what they mean.

Read Mark 4:1-20

What are the three obstacles of the word of God?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**"Sea" Crossings:** Jesus purposefully crosses to "the other side" with his disciples and then he sends them to cross on their own.

### **Feedings**

Read Mark 6:30-44 and 8:1-10. What do we learn from Jesus' words to his followers when they are faced with hungry crowds?

Read Mark 8:14-21. What are the disciples not understanding about the loaves?

### **At Home:** Mark 9-13

Choose at least one chapter to read between Mark Chapters 9 and 13. Read the chapter of your choice and then discuss these questions with a parent/adult. Write down at least two answers to discuss with your small group in Confirmation class.

Pray:

"Father, may your Spirit reveal to me the way of life through your Son Jesus. Teach me what is life and what isn't. Use these words to guide my steps into repentance and faith. Amen."

Is there a passage or story that brings you comfort?

Is there a passage or story that brings you discomfort?

With what do you resonate and feel excitement?

With what do you struggle to understand or question?

### Lesson #3: The Way of the Kingdom Points to Its Ultimate Arrival

**Reactions to the Reading:** In your small groups, discuss your reactions to the chapter you chose for the week.

**Healings of the Blind:** Two healings of blind men bookend the section of Mark 8:22-10:52.

1. The first healing takes two times to be fully effective and mirrors the disciples' struggle towards seeing Jesus clearly (Mark 8:22-26).
2. In the second healing Bartimaeus drops everything to follow Jesus (Mark 10:46-52).

These healings represent the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the disciples and how Jesus heals their blindness if they listen and submit to his word and teaching throughout this section.

#### "According to you, who am I?"

- The whole gospel narrative hinges at this point where Jesus asks his followers, "Who am I?"
- Peter gives the "right answer" of "Christ," but he fails to understand what it really means.
- Jesus tells them that for him to be the "messiah" or "Christ" it means that he must be rejected, suffer, die, and be raised.
- Peter rebukes Jesus for this and Jesus in turn calls Peter "Satan" or "adversary" for trying to stop him from walking that road.

The narrative challenges us with the same question from Jesus, "Who am I?"

Are we willing to see Jesus as the one who must be rejected, suffer, and die, and then calls us toward the same as the world continues to struggle with rebellion?

**Call to the Cross:** Jesus' second call adds depth and content to his first call of "follow me."

1. \_\_\_\_\_

-- Jesus calls his followers to say no to their own self-chosen paths in life and to say no to being lord of their own destiny.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

-- Jesus calls his followers to see that bringing life into a culture mired with death and rebellion is going to have conflict, persecution, even martyrdom.

"Try to rescue your life and you will destroy it. Destroy your life for the gospel and you will rescue it."  
This takes an enormous gift of faith to not feel overwhelmingly discouraged but keep stepping one foot at a time into the ways of Jesus.

## "Listen to Him!" (Transfiguration)

Two major things happen when Jesus goes up the mountain and is "transfigured" before his disciples:

1.

2.

This shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of the "law and prophets" and that God would have us focus our attention and listening on Jesus.

## Teaching the Way

Jesus' teachings: (circle one or two that stood out to you)

- The first will be last. The last will be first.
- Whoever embraces a child (a "nobody") is embracing Jesus.
- Only those who are like children will enter the rule of God.
- Acceptance of outsiders, but hard on insiders.
- Sell your possessions and give to the poor.
- Decide who is first in your life.
- Those who leave everything will have an abundance.
- Lay down authority and power and be the slave of all.

Jesus teaches a way of life that challenges all of our assumptions about how things are and "should be." He also challenges our values in regard to what we think is able to transform this world (not money and power).

**Showdown in Jerusalem:** All of Jesus' ministry builds to this final showdown where he takes on the corrupt political and religious system of God's people (then and now!), exposing how misled and fractured it had become.

Jesus heads into Jerusalem for the final showdown and does three things: (circle or mark the ones that actually happened).

- Sings a solo in front of the people.
- Rides in on a donkey, not a war horse.
- Makes cookies for his mother.
- Takes a nice long nap.
- Cleanses the temple, rejecting people's attempt to control God, and refocusing it on grace.
- Confronts the authorities. Tells a parable against them, fends off their attempts to trap him, and then finishes by condemning them.
- Meets up with the wise men who gave him gifts at his birth.

## Final Moments

- Anointed as King

A woman (!) anoints Jesus as king and for burial, showing that she understands what Jesus and his way is about.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Meal: Jesus celebrates the meal commemorating the escape from slavery in Egypt.

This parallels us being “set free” by receiving Christ’s body and blood.

We in turn will also be called to give our body and shed our blood for others. (Jesus’ way is also our path to follow.)

- Seeking the Father's Will

In Gethsemane Jesus calls his disciples to stay awake and watch with him in prayer. Jesus seeks the father's will while his followers sleep.

- Arrest

Judas hands Jesus over to the authorities and the disciples who did not stay awake with Jesus either strike out with the sword or flee into the darkness. Jesus however stands firm, choosing neither fight nor flight.

- On Trial

The trial is a sham, carried out by the religious authorities who feel threatened by Jesus, but no one stands up to defend Jesus.

- Sentenced to Death

Barabbas means \_\_\_\_\_ The innocent Son is condemned, while the guilty son(s) are set free.

- The Death of Jesus

Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Jesus, who is God Himself, so feels the weight of sin that he feels forsaken and cut off from God. Sin means separation from God, and Jesus experiences this separation in our place. Yet the Father never turns his back on Jesus

The crowds respond, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” Here is the climax and the point of Mark’s gospel. Jesus is revealed as God’s Son as he carries out the Father’s plan of reconciliation.

- "Who will roll away the stone?"

- Read Mark 16:1-7. Why would the women wonder about the stone?

- Why is the resurrection a significant part of God fixing his broken creation?

God bodily raises the dead. Death is the ultimate weapon both of the devil and of those who try to rule and control others. God defeats this weapon and in the process begins restoring his creation.

Why would the young man refer to Jesus as "the crucified one"?

Our faith hinges upon the atonement: Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection.

How are the women and disciples supposed to see the risen Jesus?

They must follow him into Galilee. There is no other way to see Jesus than to continue to follow him and his way.

### **"They were afraid."**

- Read Mark 16:8. Why would the women flee in terror?
- Jesus, the one who said we must lose our lives to rescue them, has been raised from the dead. This means he must be right. If this Jesus was true and is alive, as he said would happen, then what do we do with everything he said and did?
- Why would the gospel end like this on such a cliffhanger?
- The gospel writer is throwing the story into our laps. We are faced with the women's fear (which mirrors our own) and we are forced to ask ourselves, "Will we flee or will we follow?"

### **Where do we go from here?**

- The women were afraid. What about you?
- What does it mean to be "A Community following Jesus?"

### **sp**

- Following Jesus first UP
- Deep caring relationships in the body of Christ IN
- Making Jesus known where we live, work, and play OUT

