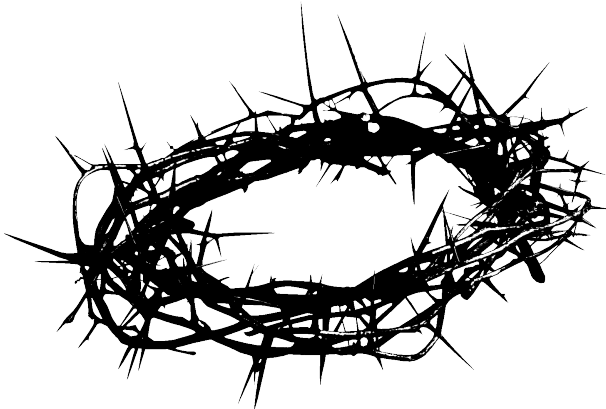


Monday, March Sixteenth

Read through the Bible



Mark
Week 3



Whenever somebody stands in a courtroom to give testimony in a case, they swear an oath to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” However, studies have shown that people commit perjury in roughly 50% of civil cases, 75% of criminal cases, and 90% of divorce cases. In theory, the penalty of perjury is meant to pressure people to remain honest, but the research shows that this is simply not the case. In today’s passage, however, King Herod feels pressured to keep an oath in the midst of a raucous party.

Read: Mark 6:14-29

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Who did people think Jesus was? (see verses 14-15) Who did King Herod think He was? (see verse 16)
- Why did Herod not want to kill John? (see verses 19-20)

Not only was Herod afraid to kill a “righteous and holy man,” but he also actually enjoyed listening to John the Baptist speak (v. 20). Herod’s interest is a good reminder that even those who are hostile to Jesus and His message shouldn’t be counted out in terms of our witness to them. As Christians, we are called to share the Gospel with all people, including those who we may see as the ‘villains’ of our society.

- Why did Herod not want to refuse the girl’s request to have John the Baptist beheaded? (see verse 26)

Had Herod made the oath privately to the girl, he might have felt emboldened to take it back. But the fact that he was standing before all of his dinner guests meant there was really no way that Herod could back out. He had to do what she asked.

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Read Matthew 5:33-37 and consider these verses in light of today’s passage. Why might it be important to simply let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no? Try practicing Jesus’ command this week.

Tuesday, March Seventeenth

In August of 1969, more than 400,000 people attended a 3-day festival in Woodstock. While organizers of the event had planned for many of the logistical concerns, one that they had not been able to figure out was how to feed so many people in one place. As a result, many ended up surviving on small cups of granola (hence, why hippies are often referred to as ‘crunchy’). In today’s passage, the disciples are unable to figure out how to feed a large crowd of people that had gathered in one place.

Read: Mark 6:30-44

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

The feeding of the 5000 is one of Jesus’ most remembered miracles. However, later this week, we’re going to read of a lesser known miracle: the feeding of the 4000. Why would Jesus perform this miracle twice? We’ll discover that answer later this week, but the key for today is that Jesus fed the 5000 in a Jewish region.

- Why did Jesus take His disciples with Him to go and rest? (see verses 30-31)
- Why did Jesus have compassion on the crowds? (see verses 32-34)
- Why might verse 41 be significant in light of verse 37?

One of the key themes of Jesus’ Gospel message is that He works through people. For example, Jesus didn’t go to every single person in the world to share the Gospel with them. Instead, He tasked His disciples to do this, and we continue that mission today. In this passage, Jesus wanted His disciples to understand their role in providing for others. He may have multiplied the bread and the fish, but He had His disciples pass it out.

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Today, Jesus continues to work through people. Think of somebody you know who is in need of something and consider how you might help to provide for her or him. Take time to pray for that person.

Wednesday, March Eighteenth

While the Tampa Bay area is known for a lot of things (sunshine, Cuban sandwiches, Gasparilla, the Dali Museum, the lightning capital of the world), we are perhaps best known for our beaches. In fact, on any given day of the week, you can go out to one of our beaches and see people driving on a jet ski, gliding on a parasail, paddling on a surfboard, or even cycling on a water bike. The only thing you definitely won’t see is somebody walking on water! In today’s passage, Jesus visits His disciples by doing just that.

Read: Mark 6:45-56

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What did Jesus do before meeting up with His disciples? (see verse 46)
- How did the disciples respond to Jesus walking on the water? How did Jesus assure them? (see verses 49-50)
- Skim through Matthew 14:22-36. Based on Matthew’s account of this situation, what part of the story is noticeably missing in Mark’s account?

Matthew, Mark, and John all cover this story of Jesus walking on the water, but only Matthew includes the part about Peter walking on the water. It is important to remember that every Gospel writer wrote his account with varying degrees of detail in order to emphasize certain aspects of Jesus’ life and ministry. Given that Mark’s Gospel account is shorter and focused more on Jesus’ actions, it is understandable why he would not include the part about Peter. As John notes at the end of his Gospel account, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

In today’s passage, Jesus took time to pray before meeting up with His disciples. Take some time to do the same!

Thursday, March Nineteenth

With the rise of coronavirus concerns over the past few weeks, health officials all over the world have been emphasizing certain messages to the public. One of them: wash your hands! Some people have (teasingly) suggested that handwashing must be a new concept for many people since soap, wipes, and hand sanitizer have been selling out at stores all over the world. In today's passage, Jesus' disciples are called out for not washing their hands.

Read: Mark 7:1-23

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How do verses 3 and 4 indicate that Mark was largely writing to a Gentile audience?
- How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees' accusation that His disciples don't wash their hands before they eat? (see verses 6-13)

You know that phrase, "Do as I say, not as I do"? In our passage today, Jesus called out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees by showing that even they fall short of following God's commands.

- According to Jesus, what makes someone unclean? (see verses 14-16 and 20-23)

Is Jesus saying that we don't have to wash our hands?! No, washing your hands is certainly a good thing, but that's not Jesus' focus in this passage. The Pharisees were so concerned with following their traditions (in this case, ceremonial washing before eating) that they failed to see that what truly makes people 'unclean' is what comes out of them. The list of 'evils' that Jesus details in verses 21-22 are just a few examples of how people can reveal their hearts to be unclean.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

As you go throughout your day (or tomorrow), consider what 'comes out of your heart' (v. 21). Afterwards, spend some time determining what 'unclean' parts of your life need to be addressed.

Friday, March Twentieth

Whenever people line up to get on an airplane, there is typically an order to how they board: first, those with physical limitations, then families with small children, and finally, everybody else. Even though these boarding orders initially preference some people over others, the reality is that everybody still gets on the plane. In today's passage, Jesus describes the order of His ministry.

Read: Mark 7:24-37

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does the woman's identity in verse 26 shed light on what Jesus said in verse 27?

In Romans 1:16, Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: *first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*" While Jesus came for everyone, His mission was first to the Jews (i.e. God's chosen people) and then to the Gentiles. Because the woman was a Gentile, Jesus pointed out that His time had not yet come for her.

- How did the woman respond to Jesus' words? (see verse 28)

You've probably noticed that Jesus' analogy seemingly comes across a bit harsh, with Jews likened to children and Gentiles to dogs. Back then, Jews negatively referred to Gentiles as 'dogs,' but in this passage, Jesus uses an affectionate phrase ('little dogs') to make the case that His ministry had an order to it (first to the Jew, then to the Gentile). The woman clearly understood the point of Jesus' analogy, but that did not stop her from exhibiting great faith. Amazed by her response, Jesus healed the woman's daughter.

- How did Jesus cause the man to hear and to speak? (see verses 33-34)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

In today's passage, people were not afraid to bring those who were suffering to Jesus (v. 32). Take some time to bring those in your life who are suffering to Jesus in prayer.

Saturday, March Twenty-First

Remember the food shortage in Woodstock from Tuesday's devotion? A lot has changed since the summer of 1969! Today, concerts, sports games, and other big events have strategic plans in place to feed large crowds of people. While the lines may still be long, very rarely does an event run out of food anymore. In today's passage, Jesus continues to miraculously provide for large crowds of people with just seven loaves of bread and a few small fish.

Read: Mark 8:1-13

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why did Jesus have compassion for the people? (see verses 1-3)

On Tuesday, we read how Jesus had fed 5000+ people in a Jewish region. In our passage today, Jesus fed 4000+ people in a Gentile region. By providing for people in both areas, Jesus demonstrated that He had come for all people, not just the Jews. We should also note that these two feedings follow the order that Jesus introduced to the woman in yesterday's reading (see 7:27).

- How does the disciples' response in verse 4 indicate that they had not learned much since 6:30-44?
- What did the Pharisees want to see? How did Jesus respond? (see verses 11-12)

You can imagine Jesus' frustration with the Pharisees. The point of His miracles was not to show off or convince the unconvinced that He was the Messiah. Instead, they were meant to show God's power so that people may come to faith in Him.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take a look back at Tuesday's application (helping to provide for someone in need). How did that go? If you weren't able to do it, what prevented you from doing so? Take some time to pray for opportunities to continue to meet peoples' needs.

Sunday, March Twenty-Second

If you want your bread to rise (or puff up), what might you need to add? In today's passage, Jesus warns His disciples about 'the yeast' of the Pharisees and Herod. In doing so, He cautions them to consider how pride and arrogance can 'puff up' people like them.

Read: Mark 8:14-26

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What did Jesus warn the disciples about? (see verse 15)
- How did the disciples understand what Jesus meant? (see verses 16-21)
- After healing the blind man, what did Jesus instruct him not to do? (verse 26)

As we are now halfway through Mark's Gospel account, you've probably noticed that Jesus often told people He healed not to tell anyone. Why would that be the case? Scholars often point to two important realities. First, Jesus' time to reveal the totality of His mission had not come yet (it would come with His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead). Second, people were often more focused on the miracles themselves than the message (mercy and grace through faith in Jesus). It is important to note, though, that Jesus didn't always instruct people not to tell others about their healings. For example, back in Mark 5:19, Jesus told the man who had been formerly possessed by demons to go home to his family and tell them what the Lord had done for him. In that situation, the message (how much the Lord had done for him) was emphasized more than the healing itself.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time to go to God in prayer and ask Him to prepare your heart for the coming week.

Questions? Comments? Contact Pastor Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 344-2684.