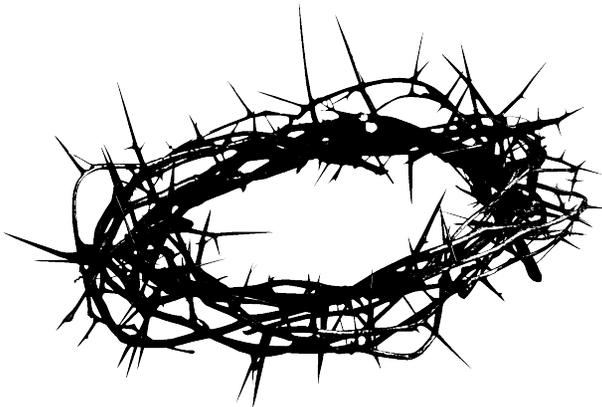


Read through the Bible



Mark Week 2



Monday, March Ninth

In 1972, New Beginnings Christian Church launched in Tampa with a curious concept: preaching from a boat...on land. That's right. New Beginnings bought a boat and put it on a platform on their property. They then encouraged people to drive up to the boat or bring a lawn chair and listen to the pastor preach from the boat. In today's passage, the original boat preacher speaks to the crowds.

Read: Mark 4:1-20

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How did Jesus teach the large crowd? (see verse 1)

Jesus was not the typical religious teacher of His day. While many were teaching in temples, Jesus would speak wherever people were gathered...even if that meant having to get into a boat just off the shore so that everyone could hear Him.

- What happened to the seed that fell on rocky places and among thorns? (see verses 5-7 and 18-19)

Notice that in each of these situations, the problem was not the seed. The problem was the condition of the soil and the surrounding environment. In the same way, when a person turns away from faith in Jesus, the problem is not God's Word. The problem is the condition of that person's heart and the environment with which she or he is surrounded by. Jesus' parable provides us with some valuable insight as to why some people hear the Gospel and initially believe, but yet ultimately come to reject it.

- What is the mark of a person who is like seed grown on good soil? (see verse 20)

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

Much like a seed that takes time to grow into a mature tree, it takes time for us to grow into mature Christians. Think of somebody you personally know that you would consider to be a mature Christian. What is it about their faith journey that you most admire? How has this person impacted your own faith journey?

Tuesday, March Tenth

Have you ever tried to communicate something to somebody, and for some reason, she or he just couldn't understand you? What did you do when you reached that point? Chances are, you probably tried to explain the concept using an analogy, a metaphor, or a story. For example, Forrest Gump used this analogy to explain the twists and turns of life: "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." In today's passage, Jesus speaks to the crowds in parables in order to explain some of the more difficult components of His Gospel message.

Read: Mark 4:21-34

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What is Jesus' main point in verses 21-23?
- What is the role of the man in the parable of the growing seed? (see verse 26) What role doesn't he play? (see verses 27-28)

This farming illustration provides us with important insight into how the kingdom of God grows. Much like a farmer who plants the seed, our role is to plant the seed of the Gospel by proclaiming Jesus to others. However, much like the farmer cannot control the growth of the seed, we cannot control the growth of a person's faith. We can certainly help someone in their Christian journey (through prayer, teaching, encouraging, challenging, etc.), but we must recognize that God is the one who grows faith. As Paul points out in his first letter to the Corinthians – "So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (3:7).

- What did Jesus do with His disciples after sharing these parables? (see verse 34)

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

Consider someone you know who is not a Christian. What is one way you could plant a seed by sharing Jesus with them this week?

Wednesday, March Eleventh

As human beings, we like to be in control of our lives. The reality, though, is that throughout our lifetime, we will consistently come across situations that we cannot control. In today's passage, Jesus' disciples come across a situation that they cannot control.

Read: Mark 4:35-41

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What instruction did Jesus give in verse 35? How does this command give us a better understanding of why He said what He said later in verse 40?

In verse 35, Jesus stated that they would go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (about a 5-mile stretch). However, by the time the disciples found themselves in the middle of the storm, they seemed to be no longer convinced of Jesus' words ("Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" – v. 38). Jesus' response in verse 40 ("Do you still have no faith?") demonstrated that the disciples had failed to trust that Jesus was in control of the situation. He said they would make it to the other side, but they did not believe.

- What was Jesus doing in the middle of the storm? (see verse 38)

Imagine you had spent all day teaching outside in the hot sun to large crowds of people. How would you feel? Chances are, you'd be looking to get some sleep as soon as you could! Even though Mark wrote a rather fast-paced Gospel account, he took the time here to show that even when Jesus was sleeping, He was still in control of the situation.

- How did the disciples react when Jesus calmed the storm? (see verse 41)

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

Consider a present situation in your life in which you have no control over. Take some time to pray today by taking your concerns to the One who is in control. Ask Him to calm your storm.

Thursday, March Twelfth

For thousands of years, many people have been fascinated (and scared) by the notion of demons. For example, over the past few decades, more than 100 movies have focused on demons, including *The Exorcist*, *Night of the Demons*, and *Paranormal Activity*. The storylines in these films often center around a supernatural battle of good (often people) versus evil (demons). In today's passage, Jesus faces off with a legion of demons.

Read: Mark 5:1-20

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How was the man with the evil spirit described? How had this demon possession affected Him? (see verses 2-5)

Mark's description of the demon-possessed man gives us important insight into what demon possession can look like: he had supernatural strength (v. 4), lived among the dead (v. 3), and mutilated his own body (v. 5). While people had tried to work with him in the past, it seems they had given up and left him to be on his own.

- How do verses 9-13 indicate the extent of this man's demon possession?

Notice that the demons inside the man said that his name was Legion. Back in Jesus' time, a Roman legion usually consisted of 6,000 men. While this does not necessarily indicate that there were 6,000 demons, it does imply that the demons wanted Jesus to know (perhaps as intimidation) that there were many of them.

- What did Jesus instruct the man to do after receiving his request to join Him in the boat? (see verses 18-20)

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

There is nothing in this world that Jesus doesn't have power and authority over. Take some time today to specifically pray for difficult situations happening around the world. Pray that Jesus' power and authority would reign over these circumstances.

Friday, March Thirteenth

For many centuries now, people have traveled to the Dead Sea for physical healing. Because it is one of the saltiest and most nutrient-dense bodies of water in the world, people often take a dip in its waters in the hopes that it will help improve some of their underlying conditions. For example, it has been reported that the high concentration of magnesium can help to improve a person's circulation and skin hydration, all while reducing inflammation. In today's passage, a woman goes to Jesus for physical healing.

Read: Mark 5:21-34

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What did Jairus believe that Jesus could do for his daughter? (see verses 22-23)
- What did the suffering woman believe that Jesus could do for her? (see verses 27-28)

Both Jairus and the suffering woman *believed* that Jesus could heal them (or their family members) of their illnesses. They didn't hope that He could or wish that He could; they had *faith* that He would. Jesus confirms this relationship between faith and healing: "Daughter, your faith has healed you" (v. 34). How do these examples shape your understanding of what it means to have faith when it comes to matters of healing?

- What charge did Jesus give to the woman? (see verse 34)

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

In today's passage, Jesus imparted a life-giving truth to the suffering woman: "Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (v. 34). This truth is at the very core of the Gospel message that we carry with us as Christians. Specifically, because of what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross, we are free to journey through this life in peace knowing that He has freed us from the suffering of our sin. Take some time today to turn to God in praise by singing or listening to a song of praise.

Saturday, March Fourteenth

When news of a particularly terrible situation breaks, people often remember vivid details of that moment. For example, many people remember where they were and what they were doing when John F. Kennedy Jr. was shot, and when the Twin Towers came down on 9/11. In today's passage, Jairus receives some heartbreaking news regarding his sick daughter.

Read: Mark 5:35-43

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What news did the men bring to Jairus? (see verse 35) How did Jesus respond to this news? (see verse 36)

Jairus just received the terrible news that his daughter had died. And yet, in the midst of this heartbreaking moment, Jesus both comforted and assured him – “Don’t be afraid; just believe” (v. 36).

- How does verse 40 indicate whether or not the people had faith in Jesus’ ability to heal?
- What did Jesus say to Jairus’ daughter? (see verse 41) How did the young girl respond to this command? (see verse 42)

Imagine how powerful this experience must have been for the little girl’s father and mother. Jesus takes them into the room, they stand beside the little girl’s bed, Jesus takes her hand, holds it firmly, and tells her to get up! And suddenly, what was once the worst day of these parents’ lives became the most beautiful, wonderful, and miraculous day they would ever experience. Jesus’ words have the power to heal!

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

In today’s passage, Jesus comforted and assured Jairus with His words (“Don’t be afraid; just believe” – v. 36). Today, God’s Word comforts and assures us as we face difficult (sometimes impossible) situations. Take a moment to consider a difficult situation from your past and thank God for speaking His words of comfort and assurance to you during that difficult time.

Sunday, March Fifteenth

Last year, FedEx unveiled a delivery robot named Roxo. Using artificial intelligence, sensors and stair-climbing wheels, Roxo can autonomously deliver cargo. However, when Roxo was introduced to people on the streets of New York City, the robot received a chilly reception. “FedEx will never get a robot to do a New Yorker’s job,” said the mayor of New York City. In today’s passage, Jesus gets a chilly hometown reception.

Read: Mark 6:1-13

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How did the people respond to Jesus’ teaching in the synagogue? (see verses 2-3)

Nazareth was Jesus’ hometown. People had seen Him grow up there and work as a carpenter (v. 3). They remembered His family – Mary, Joseph, James, Judas, and Simon (v. 3). You can imagine their confusion, then, when Jesus returned to Nazareth teaching with power and authority in the synagogue. You can also imagine their confusion when they heard from others that He had performed miracles and had healed people of their diseases. How could the Jesus they once knew be the very same guy now? The people of Nazareth were so focused on Jesus’ human nature that they failed to see His teaching and miracles as evidence of His divine nature too.

- How did Jesus respond to their concerns? (see verses 4-6)
- What instructions did Jesus give to the disciples? (see verses 8-11) What message did the disciples preach? (see verse 12)

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.