



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers  
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

**WEEK 39  
MARK**

**SEPTEMBER 24-28, 2007**

DAY	THROUGH THE BIBLE	ABBREVIATED STUDY
Monday	Matthew 20-21, Psalm 41	Acts 12:11-17; 13:5; 13:13; 15:36-41; 1 Peter 5:12-14; Psalm 41
Tuesday	Matthew 22-23, Psalm 42	Mark 4:1-20, Psalm 42
Wednesday	Matthew 24-25, Psalm 43	Mark 8:1-38, Psalm 43
Thursday	Matthew 26, Psalm 44	Mark 11:1-10, 12:1-12, Psalm 44
Friday	Matthew 27-28, Psalm 45	Mark 14:1-42, Psalm 45



Connecting people to abundant life.

---

**PRAYER JOURNAL**

---

**This week I am praying for . . .**

. . . Bonni Carr, Karen Gibson, Margie Hall, Luanne Jaime, Maura Taylor, Barbara Sykes, Shelley Ulrich, and John and Ginny Wiedmann, members of the Ecuador Mission Team. Pray for travel mercies and blessings from Sept 22 – Oct 6 as they serve with For His Children in their orphanages in Quito and Latacunga.

. . . the Shepherd's Food Pantry and its outreach in our community.

And . . .

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

**READ**

Acts 12:11-17; 13:5; 13:13; 15:36-41

1 Peter 5:12-14

Psalm 41

**REFLECT**

The second Gospel in the NT is generally understood to be the first to have been written down. An early and reliable tradition affirms that the author was the “John Mark” appearing here and there in Acts and the later epistles of the NT. Mark is not an unambiguous character in the stories we have. A resident of Jerusalem, he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but then left the group for reasons not disclosed in the story. The second time around, Paul balked at taking him and so he went off with Barnabas instead, on a journey whose details have been lost (see the passages listed above in Acts). Later tradition says that he eventually accompanied Peter to Rome, serving him closely, and ultimately recording for posterity the stories and teachings that Peter would tell the church about Jesus. This relationship seems to be reflected in the passage in 1 Peter (“Babylon” there refers to Rome).

Much scholarly attention is given to the testimony of Papias, an early pastor in Asia Minor, who is the one who wrote that Mark recorded the “anecdotes” of Peter carefully and accurately, and arranged them into a consistent story. Some have argued that this cannot be true, given the negative picture of Peter and the disciples in the Gospel – at times they seem to lack all faith and comprehension (e.g., 8:17). But others observe that Peter would have been the first to admit his early errors and rashness, as an apostle and pastor. Further, the point of view of the disciples in Mark is often seen from Peter’s vantage point (see 1:35-36; 8:31-34; 9:2; etc.); he is no hero, but rather sort of a representative disciple. So we can accept this account of the writing of the Gospel of

Mark. It is certainly not “Peter’s memoirs,” in the sense of today’s endless chain of first-person tell-all books. No: Mark partnered with Peter to publish the story not of Peter but of the Lord they both loved and served.

We will see how insistently Mark keeps the person of Jesus at the center of things, despite all that would displace Him. Others were distracted by the laws of the Pharisees, the power of the Sadducees, the wonder of the miraculous, the excitement of the moment, the pull of politics, and, in the case of the poorest of the poor, their own hunger and thirst. But Mark had learned, as Peter had learned, what Jesus taught: that all these matters were simply “the things of men” (8:33); what Jesus had to offer in His very presence was something radically different: the very Son of God (9:2-8).

Tradition says that eventually Mark returned to Jerusalem, and then took up the position of senior pastor at Alexandria. (The Egyptian Orthodox churches treat him as their “founding apostle.”) So whereas Mark may have had a bad moment as a young man with Paul, it looks like we ought to remember him as someone who recognized and fulfilled a series of important ministry opportunities. No doubt his message was a consistent one: Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1:1).

**RESPOND**

The story of Mark speaks to us about failure and forgiveness, about falling and rising. This is also the theme of Psalm 41. Mark’s experience of the grace of God, no doubt very private, launched him into a powerful impact upon community, culture, and politics. Our own experience of grace, of knowing God’s forgiveness and reality, should surely likewise make an impact in our families and communities.

**PRAY**

“You know me inside out, you hold me together, you never fail to stand me tall in Your presence so I can look You in the eye. Blessed is God, Israel’s God, always, always, always. Yes, yes, yes.” Psalm 41:12-13  
(*The Message*)

- D.D.

**READ**

Mark 4:1-20

Psalm 42

**REFLECT**

As we noted yesterday, the Gospel of Mark is rooted in the lifetime of preaching of Peter the apostle of Jesus. Mark apparently took what were the shorter and longer sermons and talks that Peter would have given on various occasions, and wove them into a continuous narrative. But he shows some artistry himself in doing this. One of the recognizable techniques of Mark is what is called “sandwiching:” he inserts one account into another, so that each gains something from the other. One well-known example, in Mark 11:12-22, tells how Jesus curses the fig tree, then enters the Temple to rebuke what He finds there, and the next day the tree is found to have withered; the combination suggests that the days of Jerusalem’s power are drawing to a close.

Our passage today gives us one of the sermons of Jesus in an extended parable. It is a preacher’s sermon, and describes something of the dynamic of preaching; it would have been dear to the heart of Peter. It is also presented in something of a sandwich, since Mark first gives the parable, then Jesus’ private reflections on it, then the parable’s explanation.

The Parable of the Sower is classically powerful in its simplicity and clarity. As the sower scatters his seed, not all falls onto the best ground; the grains that land on the exposed roadway, or among rocks, or among thorns and other weeds, have less of a chance to develop into healthy and fruitful plants. Jesus’ disciples wanted to know: what was His intent in telling the parable? Opposition to Jesus’ ministry is beginning to heat up (3:21, 22, 30, 32), and this parable seems to speak to that. Why doesn’t everyone glimpse the astonishing fresh truth, that Jesus is bringing something absolutely new and wonderful? Jesus’ reply is that part of the answer at least is that people’s hearts are in different places,

whether through circumstances or distractions, chosen or unwelcome. But another truth lies sandwiched alongside that one, as we hear in Jesus’ citation of Isaiah 6. He preaches in parables precisely to bring out the response or the rejection that is already a dynamic in each heart. Poor circumstances can be overcome, so even can poor motivation, in responding to the full promise of the good news. But the essence of the matter cannot be ignored: will we come to Him, as the disciples do instinctively for an answer (4:10)? Will we respond with all our heart to God, and to Jesus as His Son, or not? Others may have impressive tales explaining their adverse circumstances or many distractions (4:15-19), but the basic and tragic reality is that, encountering Jesus, they have moved the wrong way. On one level it’s all about the hearts. But on a more significant level it’s all about Jesus.

So again we see that as Peter placed Jesus, not himself, at the heart of his preaching, so also for Mark the parable is about more than preaching; it is about Jesus. He is Himself the Sower, Himself the Word, Himself the message, Himself the kingdom of God – Himself the gift of grace that each heart longs to know.

**RESPOND**

As we interact with those around us who do not know the Lord, it is easy to come to preliminary judgments about whether they are likely to accept Christ. This passage warns us not to be shallow in our judgments; anyone who has the chance to encounter Christ afresh is a prime candidate for His grace. And how careful we must be to present a truly Christian character ourselves, and not give others the opportunity for a shallow rejection of the faith we represent.

**PRAY**

Lord, we confess today with the Psalmist, that knowing You is the essence of it all: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God!” Psalm 42:1

- D.D.

**READ**

Mark 8:1-38

Psalm 43

**REFLECT**

Today we will look at the shape of Mark's Gospel as a whole. Readers have noted that he has presented the story of Jesus in three stages. In stage 1, as Jesus arrives preaching the coming of the kingdom of God, His works and His teachings stir much excitement, as well as concern. His fellowship with "sinners" and His miracles performed even on the Sabbath begin to turn the Pharisees against Him. But He draws disciples to Him, and larger and larger crowds are attracted by the things He does and says. Lurking in the background is the question, "Who is this?" (3:11-12; 4:41; 6:14-16). But true insight into His mission seems almost obstinately absent (8:14-21).

Stage 2 begins as Jesus directly raises the question of who He is, at least within the group of His own disciples. In our passage today, He turns from doing miracles to challenge them directly (8:27-30): "Who do you say that I am?" Peter's answer comes as much as a surprise to himself, one feels, as anyone. Processing all he has seen and heard, he blurts out the only possible answer: "You are the Christ!" Jesus then takes advantage of this new level of insight to begin to divulge more about His mission. He tells them that He must be betrayed to the authorities and die, but that He will rise from the dead (8:31-32). Further, He warns them that this sort of self-dedication and self-giving will henceforth characterize those who follow Him (8:31-38). In stage 2, chapters 8-10, we find fewer miracles and more attention to discipleship.

Stage 3 represents the return of conflict with the Jerusalem authorities, climaxing in His trial and death. It begins at chapter 11, with the entrance on Palm Sunday; with this royal procession, Jesus begins

to make clear to the public who He claims to be. During His week in Jerusalem His desire to speak into the heart of Judaism will set the tone, both for the disputes that arise and for His own teachings. In each case He shows that He is the truth at the heart of all tradition; His transformation of the Passover into the Church's Eucharist is just one example. His in-your-face challenge to the establishment leads to His arrest, trial, and execution, as He predicted. And as He predicted, He rose.

What determines the move from stage to stage? Some have suggested that misunderstandings and failures of insight forced Jesus into more and more dangerous declarations. But Mark's Gospel indicates not that Jesus was forced by circumstance, but that He chose these moments to disclose Himself more profoundly. He prompted Peter's confession, opening the way to a deeper disclosure about His mission. He set up the arrangements for Palm Sunday (11:2), prompting a public display that no one could ignore. His gifts to us of the Lord's Supper, and of His redeeming death, were not matters of contingency, but things that "must" (8:31) take place. The shadows darkened as He moved toward the Cross; but it was because Jesus, the light of the world, kept cranking up the voltage.

**RESPOND**

As Christians we enjoy the sense of encounter with Jesus, whether in worship, in prayer, in the sacraments, in fellowship, or in service in His name. Real encounter with Jesus, however, always means a challenge as well as a blessing. As we rest in His love just now, what specific challenges do we feel Him bring? What is He telling us about family? Work? Church? Our community? About shining our own light this day?

**PRAY**

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth and let them lead me. Let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling places." Psalm 43:3

- D.D.

**READ**

Mark 11:1-10 and 12:1-12

Psalms 44

**REFLECT**

Today we look at two passages from “stage 3” of Mark’s Gospel, as Jesus turns to Jerusalem itself to confront the problems at the very heart of God’s people. We will trace specifically the way Mark makes it clear that, for all the wisdom of the ancient traditions, and for all the intensity in which they are followed in Jerusalem, Jesus Himself surpasses them all, because He is greater than anything that has yet been known.

Jesus plans His entry into Jerusalem as a public spectacle. Important in His plans – and in Mark’s story – is the procuring of a colt “on which no one has ever sat” (11:2), a direct appeal to prophecy of the messianic king (Zech 9:9-10; see also 1 Kings 1:38). But having in some sense declared Himself to be the coming king, surprisingly Jesus does little else except let the scene play itself out. At the very most, He refrains from restraining others. Others lay down clothes and branches; He lets them. Others shout that David’s kingdom is returning; He allows it. He neither confirms nor denies their demonstrative claims except by His acquiescence – which is acknowledgement enough (as we see in 15:26). Most unexpectedly, He actually does nothing in Jerusalem when He gets there, except to look around the Temple complex sort of like a wide-eyed tourist from Galilee; and then leave (11:11). The over-all impression is that Jesus both accepts the tradition, and will not adhere slavishly to it. Yes, He is the king, and no, He will not allow popular expectation to define what that means. Yes, they are right to shout “Hosanna” – but they haven’t seen anything yet. Accepting the contours of the Jewish faith, Jesus nevertheless completely redefines the moment. He knows who He is, and what God requires of Him.

The Parable of the Vineyard in Mark 12 is another way in which Jesus defines His arrival in Jerusalem. Here He comes not as the acclaimed king, but as the son of the vineyard’s owner, to fix a massive problem. Again the context is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, this time in a parable from Isaiah 5:1-7. Isaiah condemns the faithlessness of Israel by likening it to a vineyard that bears no fruit; the only prospect for it is destruction. Jesus begins the same way Isaiah does (see Isaiah 5:2), then takes it a different direction: it is the tenants of the vineyard that are the problem, not the vineyard itself. In other words He uses clear references to Isaiah both to declare Himself to be the “beloved son” of the vineyard’s owner, and to condemn the kind of leadership He finds in Jerusalem. He knows it will cost Him His life, but He knows resurrection is also coming (12:10-11). So again Jesus uses the language of the culture to announce something the culture had never envisioned. More specifically: our problem of human sin, so entrenched from the days of Isaiah, needed a more drastic approach to address it properly than anyone had ever imagined. We needed Jesus the beloved Son – to come, to love, to die, to rise, to save.

**RESPOND**

Psalms 44 covers similar territory. The Psalmist begins by recalling the faithfulness of God and His promises to deliver, and ends by calling upon God to “Rise up, be our help” in a fresh situation of danger and despair. He doesn’t really want the old days: he just wants one good new day. Have you ever felt that? Mark teaches us that the best offer of a fresh chance and a new day comes from Jesus, as we learn His saving love.

**PRAY**

Dear Lord, Thank you for coming to me, blessing me, enriching me, challenging me, and asking me to follow You.

- D.D.

**READ**

Mark 14:1-42

Psalm 45

**REFLECT**

“The mission of Glenkirk is to lead uncommitted people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.” What does Mark contribute to our mission at Glenkirk, and in particular to being disciples of Jesus Christ?

Whereas the other Gospel writers have more explicit blocks of material on Christian discipleship, Mark’s message on this topic is something we have to find in other contexts. The basic reason is that he gives so much focus to Jesus that he does less in terms of intentional instruction to the Church. But the message is nevertheless rich and diverse. In the passage we have chosen for today, though the focus is on Jesus, each of the accounts tells us much about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

14:1-11 recounts two stories in Mark’s signature “sandwich” style. The decision to betray Jesus by stealth, using Judas, is wrapped around the story of the unnamed woman who breaks an expensive bottle of oil of Jesus’ head in an act of adoration. The unquestioning love of the woman, lavish enough to raise the eyebrows of the bystanders (14:4), abruptly contrasts with Judas and offers the more reliable model for His followers. Her act related to His fate in a way that she did not predict, and as a result her (anonymous!) fame is assured; but none of this was part of her motivation. She simply “gave what she had.” (14:8) As disciples we are called to give our all.

14:12-25 gives the story of the Passover meal that becomes the Last Supper. Again Judas’ betrayal gets sandwiched in with a reference in the middle of it, so that even in this most intimate setting the question is raised about what a good disciple is (14:19). The Passover story shows

Jesus in His characteristic confidence, sending disciples to fulfill the arrangements He had already begun (reminiscent of the incident with the colt). And at the Supper itself He simply and powerfully alters this central meal of Judaism into the central sacrament for His own followers. The message is clear: the followers of Jesus will live by adhering to the death and the life of Jesus. We are not encouraged to “find God our own way;” Jesus as the Son of God has come to establish God’s way, represented by the bread, blessed and broken, and the wine poured out. As disciples we are called to live in Christ.

14:26-42 tells the story of the Garden of Gethsemane. First Jesus warns the disciples again of His imminent death and resurrection, and gets an argument from Peter about whether Peter will deny a relationship to Jesus. Judas’ betrayal offers no lessons for a true disciple; but Peter’s denial, acknowledged and forgiven by Jesus, does provide a wonderful promise for us. If Peter failed Jesus and was forgiven, we also may rely on the grace of God to lead us through repentance to forgiveness. But the great model of discipleship in this passage is Jesus Himself. He shows that in His agony there is only one place to go: to God in prayer (14:35-36). We often think of the “Abba!” prayer as one of joy and praise, and so it is. But here Jesus uses it to express His deepest anguish, as He casts Himself on the heart of the Father. As disciples we are called to live in intimate reliance upon the love of God in Christ. (See Romans 8:14-17!)

And so, as ever in Mark, it all comes back to Jesus: we owe Him everything, we receive everything from Him, and we talk about it with Him on a daily basis.

**PRAY**

Dear Lord, I praise You for the Savior that You are. As in Psalm 45:1, “My heart overflows with a good theme; I address myself to the King.” Draw close, and stir my prayers of praise and supplication. And lead me today in the ways of Your kingdom.

- Dave Dorman

# ***Walk Through The Bible Readings***

## **MONTH AT A GLANCE**

### **September 24-28 – Week 39**

Monday	Matthew 20-21	Psalm 41
Tuesday	Matthew 22-23	Psalm 42
Wednesday	Matthew 24-25	Psalm 43
Thursday	Matthew 26	Psalm 44
Friday	Matthew 27-28	Psalm 45

### **October 1-5 – Week 40**

Monday	Mark 1-4	Psalm 46
Tuesday	Mark 5-7	Psalm 47
Wednesday	Mark 8-10	Psalm 48
Thursday	Mark 11-13	Psalm 49
Friday	Mark 14-16	Psalm 50

### **October 8-12 – Week 41**

Monday	Luke 1-2	Psalm 51
Tuesday	Luke 3-5	Psalm 52
Wednesday	Luke 6-7	Psalm 53
Thursday	Luke 8-10	Psalm 54
Friday	Luke 11-12	Psalm 55