

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Small Group Bible Study

SERIES INTRODUCTION

We begin our bible studies for July with a call to persevere in the faith by continuing to gather as the body of Christ. Although this is a special topic for Youth Sunday, it is a message that is relevant for all believers, young and old. After the Synod Sunday pulpit exchange, we will begin a new sermon and bible study series on the Gospel according to Mark. The shortest of the four Gospels is concise, straightforward, and chronological. The emphasis of the Gospel of Mark is on Jesus being the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God and the events recorded all serve to point to this central truth of the Christian faith. Jesus is seen to announce the Kingdom of God through His ministry. He healed the sick, performed miracles, and preached the Good News. He dealt primarily with three groups of people: the disciples, the crowds and the religious leaders, none of whom truly understood Jesus. The disciples left Him, the crowds jeered Him and the religious leaders sought to arrest Him. It was only in the end, and at the cross, that a Roman centurion, a Gentile, recognised Jesus as the Son of God. Do we recognise Jesus for who He is and truly understand His message for us?

2 Jul

Connected (Youth Sunday)
Hebrews 10:19-25

9 Jul

Synod Sunday

16 Jul

Prepare The Way
Mark 1:1-8

23 Jul

Lessons On Miracles And Healing
Mark 1:29-45

30 Jul

**The Healing Of The Paralytic
(Gospel Sunday)**
Mark 2:1-12

Connected

HEBREWS 10:19-25

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

This epistle “demonstrates that the true knowledge of the wonderful and blessed truths of the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, that His being our Leader and Forerunner in the path of obedience and perfect surrender to God’s will, above all, of His heavenly Priesthood in the power of an endless life, and His having procured us perfect liberty of access and abode in God’s Presence through His blood, gives a strength to our faith and hope, which enables us in very deed to obtain the promise and live as God would have us do.”

For Study and Discussion

- 1) Read verse 19-22. Privileges of the New Life
 - a) Hebrews 9:1–10:18 compares and contrasts two ways of approaching the Most High Place: the old way through the first covenant, and the new and living way through the new covenant. What is the meaning of this “Most Holy Place” for us? Why can we have the confidence to enter it?

 - b) Read verse 21, how is Jesus described here? What does it mean for us that he has taken on this role? Consider Hebrews 7:23-28.

 - c) What is the first thing that believers are encouraged to do, given the truths highlighted by the two “since” statements? According to the author, how should we do this?

 - d) The author addresses two conditions of the heart and body that might deter some from drawing near to God. What are these? What has happened that these are no longer obstacles that prevent us from drawing near to God?

- e) How can we remind ourselves of these truths daily so that we can have the full assurance and confidence to draw near to God under all circumstances?
- 2) Read verses 23-25. Responsibilities of the New Life.
- a) List all the actions that the author further encourages believers to take in light of the truths stated in verses 19-21.
- b) Are there opportunities for you to do all that the author says we should? How have you benefitted from others encouraging you in this way?
- c) What does “the Day” that is approaching refer to? Why may some give up meeting together as this Day approaches and fail to hold on to the hope that they profess? Consider Matthew 24:3-13.
- d) What reason does the author give for holding on to the hope that we profess?
- e) Why do you think it is important for us to spur one another on to love and good deeds even as we encourage one another to hold firmly to our faith? Consider Ephesians 4:2-6.

Discipleship Pointers

“One of the reasons that God has called us to gather together regularly is that we are so forgetful. We forget who God is and endeavour to live based on our own merit and strength...We forget how magnificent our resources are in Christ, how complete his provision is, and how precious it is that he is always near. We forget how wise, encouraging, protective, and freeing God’s Word is. We forget our need for the body of Christ; that our spiritual life is meant to be a group project. We forget that we have not only been blessed to be recipients of God’s grace, but have been called to be tools of that grace in the lives of others...We forget that we have been created to live for a glory that is bigger than our own and for a kingdom that is greater than what we would construct on our own. Yes, we need to gather again and again, and through worship, preaching, and mutual fellowship, to remember what we would otherwise forget.”

– excerpt from *New Morning Mercies – A Daily Gospel Devotional* by Paul David Tripp

Family/Group Moments

- Discuss how you are enjoying the privileges that we have through Christ.
- Discuss how you can encourage each other to act on the responsibilities of living in Christ.
- Pray for each other that as a group, you will not give up meeting together but instead mutually encourage each other to love, good deeds, and perseverance in the faith.

Prepare the Way

MARK 1:1-8

GENERAL SURVEY

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Introduction

The author of the gospel according to Mark (thought to be John Mark, a companion of the apostle Peter) began his account with the public ministry of John the Baptist. Designed to be read aloud, Mark's gripping narrative invites his audience to ponder the significance of the facts he is presenting and to respond in a personal way to the gospel message. In this opening passage, Mark establishes the identity of Jesus and traces the beginning of the gospel to the promises of God as proclaimed through Israel's prophets. How does John the Baptist prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah? How should we respond to the gospel message? How shall we respond as a people who know the power of God to free all people from sin and death through Jesus Christ?

For Study and Discussion

- 1) Read verse 1 carefully. This single verse at the start of the Gospel account is packed with meaning and sets the stage for the rest of the book.
 - a) According to Mark, the gospel is about Jesus. Who does he say Jesus is?
 - b) Read Hebrews 1:1-4 and John 19:7. What meaning does the title "Son of God" hold for the Jews? What is so offensive about Jesus claiming this title for himself that the Jewish religious leaders demanded that he be crucified?
 - c) How is knowing Jesus' true identity the key to a correct understand of the gospel?
- 2) Read verses 2-5.
 - a) Although Mark quoted scripture "as it is written in Isaiah the prophet", he actually combined two quotations from Malachi 3:1 (verse 2), followed by Isaiah 40:3 (verse 3). By doing so, he followed an ancient convention of introducing a combined citation using its most important source, in this case Isaiah.
 - i. What Old Testament prophecy did John the Baptist fulfil?
 - ii. What was his role? Consider also Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 17:10-13, and Luke 1:13-17.
 - b) It is thought that baptism as a washing in water with a spiritual significance had its roots in the Old Testament and pre-Christian Jewish practices .
 - i. What kind of baptism did John the Baptist preach?

- ii. Baptism with water is a physical cleansing that reflects a spiritual change in heart of the one being baptised. What is this heart-felt change for the people who heard John's message?
 - iii. How did the people respond to John's preaching? What does this say about the spiritual needs of the people to whom John was preaching?
 - iv. How did John's ministry prepare the people to believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah?
- c) As one who has heard and understood the gospel and has been reconciled to God through your faith in Jesus Christ, how can you prepare others to believe and be saved? Consider 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.
- 3) Read verses 6-8. Israel's prophets, including Isaiah and Malachi, had consistently called Israel to repentance in order that they might know God's gracious forgiveness and thus be reconciled to him.
- a) John the Baptist, like all of Israel's prophets, was only God's messenger.
 - i. How would you summarise the specific message that John brought to God's people?
 - ii. Is this message consistent with what Jesus and the disciples preached? Consider Mark 1:14-15 and Acts 2:38. Is this the gospel message that you proclaim to others?
 - b) John says that one who is more powerful than him will baptise with the Holy Spirit. How is baptism with the Holy Spirit different from baptism with water? Consider Ezekiel 36:25-28, Romans 8:1-2, and 1 Corinthians 3:16.
 - c) At the moment we believed in Jesus and accepted him as our saviour, we have been baptised with the Holy Spirit. How has the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you transformed you and the way you live your life? Consider Romans 8:11-13 and Hebrews 10:22.

Discipleship Pointers

- The gospel (good news) is about Jesus who is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God. Let us always remember who we have believed in.
- God has a plan of salvation for the world that He has been revealing and faithfully carrying out throughout history. Let us be confident in the hope that we hold on to, because our hope is not based on our works but on God's promise.
- As sinners redeemed by God, let us be God's messengers, bringing the gospel to those who have not heard the good news, preparing them to believe in Jesus.
- As believers who have been baptised with the Holy Spirit, let us respond by living out our transformed life in Christ, relying on the power of the Spirit who dwells in us.

Family/Group Moments

Reflect on the following questions individually and share your responses:

- How did God prepare you to believe in Jesus?
- How may God be using you to prepare others to believe in Jesus?
- How is God preparing you for the day when Jesus will come again?

- 3) Read verse 40-45. Jesus cleanses a leper, who in those days would have lived an ostracised life, being pronounced unclean (Leviticus 13:1-3).
- a) What moved Jesus to heal the leper?

 - b) Jesus stretched out His hand to touch the leper. From other records, Jesus could heal from a distance, why do you think He chose to touch the leper?

 - c) Jesus commanded the leper not to tell anyone. Why? Consider what happened when the leper went out and told everyone about his healing.

 - d) Read Leviticus 14:3-7. Although priests could not cleanse lepers of their disease, they were the ones who can pronounce that they have been healed and thus no longer considered unclean. Why do you think Jesus commanded the now-healed leper to show himself to the priest even though he did not want the public to know about the healing?

However, Jesus often commanded silence and sought to minimise the proclaiming of His true identity and miraculous powers (cf. 1:25, 34; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; 9:9). Why did Jesus do this? Some contend that Mark and the other Gospel writers inserted these commands for silence as a literary device to explain why the Jews did not recognise Jesus as the Messiah during His earthly ministry. This view is called “the messianic secret,” that is, Jesus’ messiahship was kept secret.

A more satisfactory view is that Jesus wanted to avoid misunderstandings that would precipitate a premature and/or erroneous popular response to Him (cf. comments on 11:28). He did not want His identity declared till He had made the character of His mission clear (cf. comments on 8:30;9:9). Thus there was a progressive withdrawal of the veil from His identity until He openly declared it (14:62; cf. 12:12).

Discipleship Pointers

- Sin ostracises us from God. Jesus’ mission is not to only heal the physical aspects of humanity, but the spiritual breakage of humanity from God.
- We should put all our healing needs, physical and above all spiritual needs unto Jesus.

Family/Group Moments

- Discuss how small groups and the church can learn from Jesus in prioritising between doing good works and spreading the good news.
- Do we offer “samples” and then follow-up with the message like Jesus?

The Healing of the Paralytic

MARK 2:1-12

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

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KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

The book of Mark was written to be “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). As a Gospel, it is “good news” that not only tells people who Jesus was, but also challenges them to think deeply about their personal relationship with him. As James Brooks says, “Mark is more than a book about Jesus. It is also a book about being a disciple of Jesus.” Thus, when Mark records the beginning of his ministry he quotes Jesus saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15). Repentance and belief are essential ingredients of the good news about Jesus. Those who encounter Jesus must repent of the sins that they have committed against God and others and believe that Jesus can and will forgive them and restore their broken relationships.

This understanding of the way people should respond to the gospel fills the book and is clear in this passage. In these verses we encounter two different responses that characterize how both ancient and modern people react to the person of Jesus—faith and rejection.

For Study and Discussion

- 1) Jesus’ return to his home town caused so much excitement that the house where he was speaking was filled to overflowing. Many clearly thought that he was the Messiah or at least a new prophet. Even so, some people were present who had no interest in accepting Jesus’ words as good news.
 - a) Who were these people, what do you know about them, and why were they there?

 - b) Who in our modern world might be like them?

- 2) Mark’s main interest in this passage concerns the paralysed man who was brought to Jesus by his friends. While modern readers are often distracted by how they might dig a hole in the roof (which was probably made of sticks or straw caked with mud), the text is more interested in the fact that, “Jesus saw their faith.” The plural word their is key.
 - a) Do you think this means the faith of the four men who carried the bed or that it included the paralysed man? What might support your conclusion?

 - b) How does this impact your understanding of how Jesus responded? How should this influence the way you treat people who are ill today?

- c) Why did Jesus say “Son, your sins are forgiven,” rather than “Rise, take up your bed and walk” when the second seems to make more sense in the context? Why did this upset the scribes so much that they accused Jesus of blasphemy? Note that blasphemy was a crime punishable in the OT by death (Lev 24:16) and would later be cited as a reason for Jesus to be killed (Mark 14:64).
- d) What is the connection between sin and sickness, and physical healing and the forgiveness of sin? Why would the scribes find this so surprising? Which is easier to say: “Your sins are forgiven” or “Rise, take up your bed and walk”? Why?
- 3) In v10 Jesus refers to himself as “Son of Man.” This is the usual way in which he referred to himself and the first of fourteen times he uses the phrase in Mark. In the OT, “son of man” is usually as a synonym for a man, a human being (see Pss 8:4; 144:3; 145:12; Ezek 2:1, 3, 6, 8), Jesus apparently used it in a specially way, following Daniel 7:13 where it referred to the one who came before the Ancient of Days and was given dominion and glory and a kingdom and received the worship of many peoples. Jesus seemed to use this term because it was more ambiguous than openly calling himself the Messiah (with all of its political and religious overtones) and required that people made up their mind on who he was.
- a) Look at the passages in which “Son of Man” was used in Mark (2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 61) and classify the ways in which Jesus used the term. Notice that the emphasis is more on his destiny than identity.
- b) What was the reaction of the people who saw Jesus perform this miracle? Do you think that they understood that he was able to forgive sins? Why? Did everyone have the same reaction?
- c) How does Jesus’ ability to heal this paralysed man impact your prayers for others who are sick? How do you reconcile this with the reality that not everyone is healed and that we will all fall to our last illness?

Discipleship Pointers

- Mark 2:1-12 is part of a section in the Gospel in which Jesus enters into conflict with Jewish religious leaders during his Galilean ministry (2:1-3:6). The conflict in this passage concerns Jesus’ ability to forgive sins. While the scribes believed Jesus’ announcement that the man’s sins were forgiven amounted to blasphemy, they had no problem acknowledging that the man was a sinner. They may well have blamed his paralysis on his sin.
- Many people in our day have a very different view of sin. Some deny that it exists. Others think that they are not guilty of sinning or that God will forgive all sins except perhaps for the most serious ones “because he’s nice and wouldn’t hold that against us.” The biblical picture of sin is quite distinct. Sin is a failure to hit the mark that God has set. It is lawlessness. It results in God’s wrath, punishment, and death. Only because of what Jesus did on the cross can people be properly forgiven of sin, God’s wrath removed, and relationship with God restored.

Family/Group Moments

- Have you confessed your sin to God and asked for his forgiveness?
- Do you encourage others to do the same? Only those who acknowledge that they are sinners under God’s wrath see their need for a Savior and call out to him for salvation.

Little Steps To Great Learning!

Preparation:

- Attempt all questions in the relevant Bible study before your group meeting.
- Expect spiritual growth by thoughtfully working on the Bible study questions (and the suggested reading, if any) throughout the week.
- Seek the Holy Spirit's insight and guidance by praying daily in reflection of what you have learned through the Bible study.

Group Time:

- On the following Sunday, take notes during sermon to assist in focusing your thoughts.
- Be punctual for your group meeting.
- Share the insight gained through the sermon with your group.
- Be frank in sharing your response to the questions in the discipleship pointers.
- Encourage others by attesting to God's goodness and reality by sharing to the group (and others) how the Word has changed your thinking and action in response to your study in the past week.
- Using the front sheet, summarise how the lessons have helped you to understand God's revelation in the Bible through Jesus Christ, and your response to the revelation.

THE BIBLE is to be...

Read through...

Reflected in...

Lived out...

Given away...

Daily Prayer Guide

Sunday: The Church

- Church members & families
- Visitors
- Pastor & church leaders
- Sunday School teachers
- Worship leaders
- Small group leaders
- Other churches
- Outreach efforts

Monday: The Workplace

- Supervisor
- Co-workers
- Subordinates
- Customers & suppliers
- Difficult situations
- Work attitude
- Work performance

Tuesday: Acquaintances

- Mentors & mentorees
- Accountability partners
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Merchants
- Public servants
- Teachers & other school Workers
- Children's friends & their families

Wednesday: My Country

- Public officials - executive, legislative, & judicial
- Armed forces
- Public morality
- The media
- The economy

Thursday: The World

- International peace & understanding
- Missions and missionaries
- Persecuted churches
- Hunger, sickness, & disaster relief

Friday: My Spiritual Growth

- Maturity
- Understanding
- Faith
- Love toward God
- Love toward others
- Servanthood

Saturday: My Family

- Spouse
- Children
- Grandchildren
- Parents
- Brothers & sisters
- Extended family
- Unsaved loved ones

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."-Jeremiah 33:3

