

# Engaging with Mark's Gospel: *Who do YOU say that I Am?*

(or, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*)

Camp Sychar, Mount Vernon, Ohio

July 24—August 1, 2021

Bible Discussion Guide for the Hill Service



## Introduction

Many of you have attended or visited an Anglican or Episcopal church. The traditional services of churches in the Anglican Communion are full of Scripture—an Old Testament reading, a Psalm reading, an Epistles reading, and, above all, a *Gospel* reading. The Gospel reading is given the place of honor. It often takes three people. One carries the book of the Gospel down into the congregation and holds it open for the reader. A second person accompanies him carrying a cross. The third person in the procession reads the Gospel lesson. Everyone stands and reverently faces this Gospel carrier for they are welcoming the incarnate Christ of the Gospels into their midst.

This special emphasis on the Gospels is ancient. At least since the middle of the second century Christians have acknowledged the four Gospels in our Bible—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—as the only authoritative, apostolic Gospels that provide a truthful account of the life of Jesus. From the earliest centuries the book containing the four Gospels was brought into the church in procession. What is so special about these books we call Gospels? How are they different from the rest of the Bible? The first verse of the Gospel of Mark answers this question—it is because these books are the story of “the gospel [*or* good news] of Jesus Christ the Son of God.” Here we find the narrative of the most wonderful thing that ever happened—the incarnation of God’s Son. Here we read the account of how the eternal Son of God took on our broken humanity in order that we might be saved from Satan, sin and death and live in fellowship with God. Here is where we come face to face with our Saviour. He meets us in the Gospels.

Thus we come to know who Jesus is by encountering Him in this story and we discover what it means to be His disciple. Each of the four Gospels, and every passage in each of the Gospels, has this same two-fold theme—first, the identity of Jesus; and second, what it means to be his disciple. That way of putting it, however, while true, is too detached and lifeless. Mark is not inviting us to arm-chair speculation about the identity of Jesus or the nature of discipleship. The questions posed by the Gospels are not an abstract “Who is Jesus?” and “What does it mean to follow him?” These two questions come together at a climactic point in Mark’s Gospel when Jesus turns to His disciples and says, “Who do *you* say that *I* am?” (Mark 8:29, emphasis added). This question requires an answer from the whole person confronted by the Gospel narrative—heart, soul, mind, and body. When we

answer it aright, we begin both to know Who He is and to follow Him in obedience. Thus the question "Who do you say that I am?" is also an invitation, "Follow me." It is an invitation that is the opportunity of a lifetime.

Thus, we could do nothing better in celebration of 150/151 years than return to the Gospels. Let's celebrate our anniversary by meditating on the Gospel of Mark—with the purpose of answering afresh and anew Jesus' question: *Who do YOU say that I AM?*

I've tentatively divided Mark's Gospel into sections for each day, as you can see below. I've given you some questions to help you get into the text of Scripture and to stimulate your thinking. If you meditate on the day's Scripture and think about the questions before coming to the service, you will be better prepared to engage with the world's (and your) most important question: "Who do you say that I am?"

### **Engaging with Mark's Gospel: Some Probing Questions.**

*Saturday, July 24, 2021*

Introduction and Overview

*I Want to Introduce You to My Friend:* Mark Prepares Us To Meet Jesus. Mark 1:1-13

What advanced information about Jesus can we gain from each person or event in these opening verses?

*Sunday, July 25, 2021*

Jesus Reveals Himself to the Public. "Follow Me." Mark 1:14—3:12

1. What question did the people in the synagogue at Capernaum ask? What made them ask this question?
2. Why did Peter go looking for Jesus?
3. How and why did attitudes toward Jesus change beginning at Mark 2:1-12?

*Monday, July 26, 2021*

Jesus Reveals Himself to Receptive Disciples. "Your Faith Has Saved You." Mark 3:13—6:6

1. What answers did the Jewish rulers and Jesus' family give to our question: "Who do you say that I am?"
2. Why does Jesus tell the parable of the Sewer (or the Soils) to His new disciples?
3. What evidence can you find in this part of Mark that shows the fallacy of the opinions about Jesus proposed by the rulers and his family?

Tuesday, July 27, 2021 **MISSIONS DAY!**



Wednesday, July 28, 2021

Jesus Reveals Himself to Reluctant Disciples." "Their Hearts were Hardened." Mark 6:6—8:21

1. What answers did Herod and the crowds give to our question: "Who do you say that I am?"
2. How do Jesus' feeding the 5,000 and walking on the water show the inadequacy of their answers?
3. What do we learn about true purity from chapter seven?
4. Compare the feeding of the 4,000 with the feeding of the 5,000. What does this comparison show us about the disciples' grasp of Jesus' identity?

Thursday, July 29, 2021

Jesus Calls Resistant Disciples. "Take up Your Cross." Mark 8:22—10:52

1. What answer did Peter and the other disciples give to our question: "Who do you say that I am?" How did they arrive at this answer?
2. Why did Jesus rebuke Peter so harshly when Peter told Jesus that he should not go to Jerusalem and be crucified?
3. Why was Jesus so insistent that anyone who would be His disciple had to deny himself/herself, take up the cross, and follow Jesus? Every event in these chapters has something to say about what this invitation from Jesus means.
4. How does a comparison of the responses of the "Rich young ruler" and blind Bartimaeus help us to understand what it means to deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Jesus?

Friday, July 30, 2021

Jesus Reveals Himself in the Temple at Jerusalem.—No Choice but to Choose. Mark 11:1—13:36

1. What kind of authority is Jesus claiming by the Triumphal Entry and the cleansing of the Temple? (Pay attention to the Old Testament background of these events.)
2. Who does Jesus claim to be by telling the Parable of the Vineyard in the Temple?
3. What does the way Jesus answers the questions asked by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Lawyer (teacher of the law) tell us about what it means to deny ourselves and follow Jesus?

*Saturday, July 31, 2021*

Jesus Reveals Himself at the Last Supper, in the Garden, and before the High Priest, and On the Cross—"Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed?" "Surely, this man was the Son of God." Mark 14:1—16:8.

1. Why did Jesus approve of the woman anointing his head with perfume?
2. What does Jesus predicting Peter's denial and Judas' betrayal tell us about Jesus?
3. How does the Last Supper fit in with and confirm what Jesus has been telling his disciples about his coming crucifixion?
4. What is the significance of the way Jesus himself answers the question of His identity before the High Priest?
5. What does the trial before Pilate tell us about Pilate, the Jewish Rulers, and Jesus?
6. Every incident surrounding the cross is important. What was the significance of releasing Barabbas, of the soldiers dividing Jesus' clothes, of the sign over the cross, of Jesus' being crucified between two bandits, and of the way in which the passersby, the rulers, and the two thieves treated Jesus?
7. What made the Centurion testify that Jesus was God's Son?
8. What is so important about the women being the first at the tomb?