

3/15 Mark 8-10

## Chapter 8

Vs. 1-26, More intercalation as Mark wraps chapter 7 with the feeding of the 5000 (6:35-44) and the feeding of the 4000. Two similar events with some notable differences. At the feeding of the 4000, Jesus is the one who notices that the crowd is hungry and has compassion on them and raises the dilemma of how to feed them so that they'll have strength to make the journey home. In the 5000, they had 5 loaves and 2 fish, here they have 7 loaves and a few small fish. When they fed 5000 with less food, they had more left over (12 baskets), now they are feeding fewer people with more food and have 7 baskets left over. Again, before distributing Jesus "gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples." Just as 12 symbolizes the 12 tribes of Israel and completeness, so 7 symbolizes spiritual perfection and completeness in the Bible. Yeast symbolizes corruption. Jesus becomes frustrated because not only do the Pharisees fail to see what God is doing through him, but even his own disciples who were present with him for his miracles fail to see and understand what God is up to. Mark casts the disciples in the most unflattering light out of any gospel. This section is ironically concluded with the blind man who does see. This two stage healing process may indicate the two stages of Jesus' time with his disciples: his ministry, during which time they failed to see and understand, and his resurrection, during which time they came to see clearly. Hindsight is 20/20 so to speak.

Vs. 8:27-9:2, Jesus gives his disciples another chance to show they're starting to see clearly who he truly is. Peter proudly proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah, and Jesus sternly ordered them not to tell anyone –again, his Messiahship can only be rightly understood in light of his death on the cross. Jesus begins immediately to teach them exactly what it means that he is the Messiah –that he must undergo great suffering, be rejected by all the religious and political elite, be killed, and after 3 days rise again. Peter rebukes Jesus, for what Jesus was saying was offensive and scandalous. But Jesus then rebukes Peter. When he says "Get behind me, Satan" this can mean either "Get on my team" or "Get out of the way, stop tempting me." God's mission and the human vision for what the Messiah looked like were very different. Where Jesus says lay down your "life," this word can also be translated as "self." This is a timely message both for followers in the early church who were literally dying for their faith, and for us today who are called to lay down our "self" and to set our hearts and minds on God's will, rather than our own. "Adulterous" is prophetic speech for "idolatrous." The disciples are so caught up on the scandal of suffering and death that they don't take note of the incredible

good news that he will rise again! Mark believed that Jesus would return in his lifetime, just like Paul.

## Chapter 9

Vs. 1-13, Jesus takes his inner circle of disciples up a mountain alone to reveal his true nature to them, in anticipation of his resurrected glory. Moses and Elijah appeared to him. Moses was assumed into heaven via Jewish tradition, Elijah was assumed into heaven in the flaming chariot in 2 Kings 2. Perhaps they were preparing Jesus for what was to come through his own exceptional experience of death, resurrection, and assumption? Peter thought that the day of the Lord was upon them. Tradition held that the Day of the Lord would occur during the festival of booths, this is why Peter asks about making dwellings for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Perfectly logical, but he again missed the point entirely. The imagery of an overshadowing cloud is classic theophany. This is the way God led the Israelites through the desert. The voice from heaven speaks the same good news that Jesus heard at his Baptism, now for his inner circle of disciples to hear as well. They now know exactly who Jesus is: the Messiah, God's beloved son. Jesus told them not to tell anyone about what they had seen until after he rose from the dead, and they were confused about what he was talking about (again). Mark believed firmly that John the Baptist was Elijah returned, this is what Jesus is talking about. John was the Elijah figure who preceded the Messiah.

Vs. 14-50, Again, Jesus casts out a destructive spirit. The disciples did not use the right prayer. Jesus shared his second passion prediction. This time the disciples did not understand, and they did not ask clarifying questions because they were afraid. Jesus calls them out for arguing over who will be at the top of the list of disciples – they are setting their minds still on human things rather than godly things. Jesus then turns their human worldview upside down, the first among the disciples will be the most humble servant of all, not the one with the most glory. Children were considered the last, lowest, weakest, and most powerless. Jesus then addresses the issue of those outside the community. Those who are a blessing to Jesus' followers, will receive a blessing. Familiarity with the community will eventually lead to faith. Those who cause damage to a follower of Jesus (or to a vulnerable member of the community) will be cursed. Salt without saltiness is garbage. Hell or Gehenna was the garbage dump of Jerusalem, where they lit the trash on fire. This is where our understanding of hell as a fiery place comes from, because Jesus used the trash dump in this way as an illustration.

## Chapter 10

Jesus rejects divorce because of the ways in which it was used casually to cause serious harm on women. Jesus wants us to take our commitments seriously, but this text also should be read for the underlying meaning, which is that Jesus desires women to live in safety and wellness, and not to be cast off. The social consequences of divorce are not the same today as in Jesus' day, so it is important that we interpret this text in light of our own times.

Jesus' disciples ignore his own words in the previous chapter about welcoming the little children when they try to keep the children from Jesus. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God like a little child?

Again, the image of the first being last and the last first comes up. Possessions hold a powerful influence over us. Jesus doesn't want us to live in such a way that our things are idols, or lead to self-glorification, but rather to self-emptying. Jesus calls us to lay our whole selves aside and follow him. Discipleship involves a life of service, rather than a life of expecting to be served. Peter is exaggerating, for he still possesses a home in Capernaum.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> passion prediction comes as they are walking up to Jerusalem in verse 32. Jesus is trying (again) to prepare his disciples for what's to come. He goes into great detail to describe the ways in which he will be humiliated and suffer. And yet, the disciples still didn't get it. While Jesus is trying to prepare them, James and John are still seeking glory. They ask to sit on either side of Jesus, not understanding that that would involve their own martyrdoms. TRUE disciples, and TRUE leaders are to model their leadership and discipleship after Jesus' own example of servant leadership.