



TOGETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Thirty days with Mark

An introduction to our Bible month: '30 days with the Gospel of Mark' by Rev Peter Hibberts

I first remember studying Mark at High School, as part of my GCSE R.E. lessons. I remember it vividly. The R.E. Teacher was one of the reasons I went into teaching. I have since studied it at A-Level and in my own personal study. When I was at University we engaged in Evangelism and gave Mark's gospels to every student on campus. The theme of the evangelism was 'Identity.' It's the central theme of Mark's gospel and Peter Bates picks up on this in the main article (so I'll try not to tread on his toes!) Kent Bower, the writer of our Bible Month notes says, "[It's] not just an interesting tale, the gospel writers have a conviction about who Jesus is and what that means for their readers."

The thing I vividly remember about studying Mark previously is the symmetry of it. It has sixteen chapters (around 660 verses) and it pivots on Mark 8:31. It comes as Jesus heads to Mount Hermon where the Transfiguration (Jesus appearing before Peter, James and John alongside Elijah and Moses. After this point they literally and figuratively turn towards Jesus' mission at the cross.

It's almost as though there is a build up to the incident in 8:31 and then, like a roller coaster that has ticked its way up to the highest point, it begins to hurtle towards its conclusion in a white knuckle ride of missiology.

We are about to spend four weeks together in Mark's Gospel. Can I encourage you to read it from start to finish? It's a fairly easy read on face value. It's not long, it runs at a pace and it is very interesting. As a novel, I think it would do well! You may well know what happened in the earthly ministry of Jesus but the gospel writers don't just tell us that, they also tell us, "what was going on in what happened." (John Marsh, *The Gospel of St John*, Penguin, 1968, 20). Perhaps you want to set aside a morning or an afternoon and read it in one sitting. Perhaps you'd like to serialise it. (The Bible Month notes would have us tackling chapters 1:1-3:35 in week one; 4:1-8:21 in week two; 8:22-10:52 in week three; and 11:1 to the end in week four. If you do read it start to finish, spend some time in prayer first and ask God's Holy Spirit to fill you (the prayer: 'Come Holy Spirit' is a simple but beautiful one). The Bible is not just a book, not just a historical account but the word of God, God-breathed. In order to fully engage with God through it we need God present with us (which God is) and to be open to hear him through the words of the Gospel writer and the reflections of our hearts.

As you journey through the pages of Mark's gospel, can I suggest a couple of really simple questions to carry along with you on the way? Firstly, 'Who is this Jesus?' Jesus asks in Mark 8:28 'Who do you say that I am?' It's not as important what other people think or how they answer this question. What is key to Mark's gospel is who *you* (insert your name here) say that Jesus is. That question, if answered correctly and honestly, is life changing.

I want to end this short introduction to our Bible Month with the words of Kent Bower in his introduction to Mark (from the Bible Month notes):

"Through the skill of this master storyteller, readers then and now see Jesus. And in doing so, this story becomes the word of God illuminating and revealing the Word of God. It is inspired and inspiring."

(Kent Bower, 30 days with the Gospel of Mark, LWPT, 2020, 4.)



Mark's Gospel - Bible Month Part 1

Identity & Mission

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Mark 1:9-16 | Rev Peter Bates

1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week led by Rev Peter Bates.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>)

why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

2. Circuit 'Zoom' Coffee Time

Join folk from across the circuit from 11:30am each Sunday morning - you provide the coffee - we'll provide the fellowship! pop in for 5 minutes or half an hour - we'd love to see you!

If you'd like help to 'Zoom', please get in touch!

Please join us afterwards

Come with a drink and a biscuit to share in conversation after the service.

www.zoom.us

Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185

Password: Tog3ther

Phone: 0131 460 1196

Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185

Password: 48647472



3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)

08:10am - 30th May 2021

A Centenary of Note

Mattins from St George's Chapel, Windsor, marking the centenary of the birth of the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh this week.

4. Radio Nottingham

Listen every Sunday, at 8am, to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. (Online or on 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.)

If all this baffles you and you'd like to find new ways to engage with church in these times, please contact your minister.

Mark makes it plain who he is writing about. "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark states this at the very beginning of the gospel, because he wants everything we read in the gospel to relate to this statement. Mark is not asking us to take his word for it. He sets out the evidence in sixteen chapters, miracle after miracle. He takes us through the ministry of Jesus at a breathtaking pace. He begins at his baptism, where God the Father acknowledges that he is his Son. "A voice came from heaven. You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased." In the middle of the gospel, Jesus asks his disciples. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered. "You are the Christ." And at the end of the gospel, the angels proclaim to the women who had come to anoint Jesus body. "He has risen!.... go tell his disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him." And in between these accounts Mark tells us of the miracles and teaching of Jesus.

The identity of Jesus Christ is central to our faith. If he is not the Son of God then he is just a man who was caught up in a political and religious power struggle; and his life and death has little relevance to us today. But if he is the Son of God, then his life and death have tremendous implications on our life. We need to make a decision about who Jesus Christ is. And if we believe that he is the Son of God, we need to work out what our response to that decision is. We can blithely live our lives ignoring the existence of God, that is our free choice. We can acknowledge that God exists but have little to do with him, many people in our country today, live at that level, and yet many people say that in a crisis they will pray to God. We can choose to express our faith when we want to, without having any real commitment to God.

But it is clear from the gospels, that Jesus is calling us to discipleship, to identify with him. This might seem strange in our modern era, when we are so relaxed about our faith, but Jesus calls us to a deeper commitment, just as he did with his first disciples. We need to nail our colours to the mast, so that everyone is clear where we stand. In politics there are colours representing the individual parties, but behind the colours there are definite ideologies, and policies which set them apart from all the other parties. It is the same with football. Each club has its own colours, and the supporters wear them with pride. They identify themselves with the club, they have tradition and

history to back them up. The supporters enjoy telling people about the great games they have witnessed. You can tell a real supporter by talking to them. I am sure it is the same in other sports, and also in music, gardening etc. There is a difference between a person who shows casual interest and those who are completely committed.

The people that Jesus needed around him were those who were committed, those who identified with him. They bought into his teaching, his lifestyle. The disciples followed Jesus for three years, and it was only at the last hurdle that they let him down. But given a second chance, after Pentecost, they were willing to serve him to the end. The question for each one of us is this. Are we disciples, or are we casual supporters? After Jesus death on the cross and his resurrection, the Spirit came down at Pentecost, and the church took-off, and grew and grew, because the Spirit was at work in the lives of the believers. They were just ordinary men and women going about their business and gossiping the gospel. Being a follower of Jesus meant something to them, it wasn't a casual hobby that kept their interest, it was their whole life.

Today, our church is in decline. We can use many excuses to explain this away. However, the first disciples faced an even harder task than ours and yet the church flourished. In John Wesley's time, the church was at a very low ebb, and yet God's Spirit swept through our nation through the valiant work of his disciples. Great Britain was transformed by the fearless and tireless work of John Wesley and many, many other preachers and ordinary men and women. And this was done because God consumed their whole lives, he wasn't in a compartment marked 'Religion', he was in everything they did.

I am not saying we set ourselves apart like the Pharisees did, the Pharisees felt that this was the best way to be obedient to God. They defined holiness as separation from impurity. But Jesus came along and ate with tax collectors and sinners. The significance of this was that Jesus was willing to get alongside the sinners, the outcasts and the lost, so that he could win them for the kingdom. Through Jesus the Spirit could bring the sinners to repentance, the damaged healed, and the lost saved. Many lives were transformed by the Spirit's work in the disciples that Jesus sent out to all the nations. That transforming power is within us if we will allow the Spirit to take hold of our lives, so that we can be used to proclaim the gospel with our lives as well as our words.

Amen

Prayer Space

Loving Lord, we offer you our praise, acknowledging you as God. In reverence and humility, awe and wonder, we come to worship you. We come into your presence with joy in our hearts, celebrating your goodness, being overwhelmed by your love for us, and dwelling in your peace which passes all understanding. We come as we are to worship you with all our faults and failing knowing that you accept us and embrace us. Help us to be real to you in our worship and in our lives. Let this not be a ritual that has little meaning but a transforming moment, when we encounter you, the living and eternal God.

Guide us on our journey, that we may turn away from what is false and value what is real. That we may serve you wholeheartedly, as we serve our Church and our community. Forgive us when we go our own way, when we are selfish in our attitude to others, and when we hurt people by what we do or say. Thank you for your love for us and your forgiveness which washes away our sin.

Lord, thank you that we are wonderfully and uniquely made, help us to recognise and celebrate not only our differences, but the things we have in common. Help us to know when to stand out from the crowd, when to speak out, and give us the grace to listen when we need to.

Lord, we pray for an equal sharing of the world's resources. We are so privileged in this country and we do not always realise how fortunate we are. We ask that there will be an equal sharing of the coronavirus vaccines, especially to the poorer countries. We pray for countries that are suffering from severe weather conditions that you will enable them to cope, and that their government will have the resources they need to help their people. **Amen**

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like to join a prayer chain and receive prayer requests or to submit a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please

get in touch with Colin Beckett

colin1244@gmail.com.

It is for those of any church or none!

Throughout June...



June each year, in the Methodist Church, is Bible month which is the church's opportunity to study one book of the Bible for a whole month and really squeeze all we can out of it!

This year we focus on the gospel of Mark and during those 30 days we will be using readings from the gospel of Mark at our services. Join us, online, every Sunday in June.

Songs...

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty (StF 11) [LINK](#)

What a friend we have in Jesus (STF 531) [LINK](#)

What a beautiful name by Laura Wright [LINK](#)

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder (STF 82) [LINK](#)

Click [LINK](#)'s to access YouTube clips of each song.

Bubble Church Questions



As things become safer, many of our Bubbles will be reopening. Would you like to be part of Covid-Safe face-to-face church? Join a bubble today by getting in touch with your minister.

1. Who is Jesus to the people you live and work with? Who is Jesus to your friends and family? (Have you ever asked them?)
2. Who is Jesus to you? What is your testimony (your story) about who Jesus is?
3. How would introduce Jesus to a friend or stranger? How would you describe who he is?
4. Would you describe yourself as someone with an interest in Jesus or committed to him? (There is no right or wrong answer here - the right answer, if anything, is the honest one!)
5. If you are committed to Jesus, how does your commitment to him show itself?
6. What do you think there difference is between commitment to the church and commitment to Jesus?

For more information checkout the Bubble Church guide with risk assessment on the Circuit Website: <https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/bubble-church.html>

Next Week...

Next week's circuit service will be led by Rev Peter Hibberts and will be the second in our Mark series for Bible Month. In next week's message we'll explore Mission and Boundaries with a walk through Chapter 4-8 of Mark's gospel.

Join us from 10:30am on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>

If you would like to participate in the online service, in any way, please get in touch with Rev Peter Hibberts (peter.hibberts@Methodist.org.uk) this week.

2-6-21

Families activities...

Spend some time reading some of the early accounts of Jesus in Mark's Gospel (children's s versions are available, including online!) Calling his disciples (1:16-20); Healing many (1:29-34); Healing a paralytic (2:1-17); Teaching (2:18-28); Telling stories (4:1-32); Stilling the storm (4:35-41). Imagine being with Jesus in each of these events. What was Jesus like to be with?

Listen to the song 'This is me', from the Greatest Showman (you can find it on YouTube ([LINK](#))). Do any of the lyrics stand out to you? If you were to rewrite these lyrics to talk about Jesus, what might they say?

Paint a picture of Jesus as you picture him. Then describe him to someone in your family. What is he like? What kind of things does he do? Maybe as a family you could have a 'Picturing Jesus' art exhibition. (I'd love to see them and share them on our social media if you do: peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk)

Collect a 'crowd' of different pictures or better still toys. Role-play with the toys who they think Jesus is. Perhaps you'll get a surprisingly varied response from the different toys. We all picture and relate to Jesus in different ways and he beautifully meets us where we are (just like he did to each of the disciples in the gospel accounts).

PRAYER:

With your 'crowd' of different pictures or toys. What might each person say to God? We are all part of the human race and though we experience things differently, we are still called to love God and love one another.

Lord, thank you that we are all wonderfully and uniquely made, help us to recognise and celebrate not only our differences, but the things we have in common. Reveal yourself to us that we might build up our relationship with you. Show us who you really are and help us to know you with us by your spirit. Amen.

TOGETHER contributions needed!

As Nathan is on his sabbatical in the next few months, we need your input into TOGETHER more than ever. Could you write a front page article (around 500 words) for one of our editions? Perhaps you could contribute a prayer, an encouraging or even a challenging piece. **Perhaps you can share an experience of God the Holy Spirit that you've had in your life!**

If you would like to join the team or make a one-off contribution, please get in touch with Revd. Peter Hibberts by email (peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk) or telephone (01636812166).

Contributions must be received by Monday of each week for Tuesday editorial and Wednesday distribution.