

Bible Study Guide
Term 1 2023



THE SERVANT KING

Mark 8-16

Introduction

All Saints has a vision for the kind of church we want to become.

*Under God, we want to become
**a thriving church family,
engaged with our community,
where all kinds of people encounter Jesus
and are nurtured through the stages of life.***

This term as we encounter Jesus by studying Mark's gospel, each week we are going to consider how Jesus guides, informs, motivates and encourages us in the pursuit of this vision.

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Tom Barrett
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Study 1: Mark 10:13-31

Opening Question

1. Have you ever wanted to gain access to a special event or destination (perhaps a concert, play, show, sporting event, venue, party or country) and had difficulty getting in? What extraordinary thing did you do to try and gain access?

In this passage Jesus addresses the question as to what is required to gain entry to the Kingdom of Heaven. The "Kingdom of Heaven" here is to be understood as the place where God's people can live with him, under his rule and eternal blessing. Jesus' answers are inspiring and surprising. Let's explore them together.

Read Mark 10:13-16

2. The disciples "rebuked" people for bring their children to Jesus to be blessed by him. Why do you think they may have done this?
3. How did Jesus feel about what the disciples did? How was his attitude toward the children different to that of the disciples and our world?
4. Jesus said "anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it". What do you think it means to receive the Kingdom like a child and why is this prerequisite surprising?

5. **Reflect:** How does Jesus' answer challenge your attitudes as to what's important when it comes to entering God's Kingdom?

Read: Mark 10:17-27

6. What one question did the man have for Jesus? What does this question imply and why is his question important?
7. What incorrect assumption had the man made about what it means to be good? Despite his error, how did Jesus respond to him?
8. Jesus knew the man's heart. What was the man lacking to be 'good enough' to enter the Kingdom?
9. Why was it so hard for the man to enter the Kingdom? How hard is it for us to enter the Kingdom by being "good"?
10. Despite human inadequacy, Jesus explains that it is not impossible for us to enter the Kingdom. How can we enter?

11. **Reflect:** How does Jesus' answer challenge your thoughts as to what you need to do to enter God's Kingdom?

Read: Mark 10:28-31

12. What blessings (and challenges) does Jesus promise to those who follow him?

13. In light of this chapter, what do you think Jesus means by "the last will be first and the first will be last"? What difference does this show between the values of our world and the Kingdom of Heaven?

14. **Reflect:** How has this passage encouraged and challenged you to think differently about what is required to enter the God's Kingdom?

15. Our church vision (see page 2) articulates that we want "all kinds of people" to encounter Jesus. How does this passage support this goal?

Pray:

- Pray for each other and people that you love, that we may come to Jesus not trying to be "good enough", but rather having a childlike dependence and faith in Jesus.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 2: Mark 10:32-52

1. **Sharing:** When you think of greatness, what do you think that looks like? What do you think the world expects greatness to look like?

Read Mark 10:32-45

2. As Jesus was making his way up to Jerusalem, why would the disciples have been astonished?
3. What did James and John request of Jesus to do for them? What does this request tell us about their character?
4. What is the reaction of the other 10 disciples when they hear about James and John's request? What does that show us about them too?
5. Jesus responds in verse 38. How would you describe the tone of Jesus' response? What problem does he diagnose?

Jesus uses the word "baptised" in an unusual way in verses 38-39. Here "cup" means "cup of suffering," and "baptism" means "submerged in trouble" (see Psalm 69). In order for them to sit next to Jesus in glory, they need to be prepared to suffer for the kingdom.

6. Look at verse 44: In contrast to the thinking of the world, what is the way to true greatness in the kingdom of God?

7. According to Jesus, how will he himself follow this path to true greatness?

Read Mark 10:46-52

8. Jesus now has a conversation with a blind man. How is this conversation similar, and how is it different, to the conversation with the disciples?
9. How do we see Jesus acting as a servant here?
10. What do we learn here about faith in Jesus?

Reflection:

11. Do you need to be reminded to rely on Jesus, as the blind man did? Or do you need to be reminded to imitate Jesus, like the disciples were taught to?
12. What are some of the costs of servanthood today? What will we lose in order to follow Jesus?
13. How can we serve others like Jesus practically this week?
14. Does this passage encourage us to pursue any particular aspect of our church vision? (see page 2)

Pray together:

- Pray that God will help us to live for Jesus and not strive for worldly greatness.

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 3: Mark 11:1-11

1. Warming up: Some people say that they will only believe that Jesus is Lord if you can prove it is a reasonable and rational thing to do. From your experience what standards do people use to judge Jesus?

Jesus' arrival at the outskirts of Jerusalem marks the beginning of a new section. From this point on all the events occur in and around Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Pharisees who are seeking to destroy Jesus. It is Passover week and many other pilgrims have journeyed to Jerusalem, so the city is crowded and people's minds are full of the history of God's dealing with his people.

Read Mark 11:1-11 [Day 1 in Jerusalem]

2. Jesus took the initiative in preparing for his entry into the city. He tells his disciples to fetch a colt which had never been ridden. Look up Numbers 19:2-4 and 1 Samuel 6:7-8. What is the significance an animal that has never been ridden? What does this imply about Jesus?
3. As they carried out their assigned task, what might the two disciples have realised about Jesus?
4. Look at verses 7-10, and in the table below list the actions taken by the disciples and then the crowd as Jesus journeyed towards Jerusalem.

Actions	OT passage

Notes & Prayer Points

5. Read the following Old Testament passages and add them to the table next to the actions they relate to. (Not all actions will have a reference)
 - a. 2 Kings 9:9-13;
 - b. Psalm 118:26-28,
 - c. 2 Samuel 7:11b-14
 - d. Zechariah 9:9

6. How do these Old Testament connections contribute to the message of this episode?

7. Our church vision (see p2) centres around people encountering Jesus. What key things does this passage reveal about the Jesus that people need to encounter?

Study 4: Mark 11:12 - 12:12

1. Warming up: Can you think of a time when you've witnessed, or caused, some kind of commotion? What led to the normal patterns of behaviour being broken? What was the fallout?

Read Mark 11:12-19 [Day 2 in Jerusalem]

In the Old Testament book of Malachi, the people of Israel complained that God did not come to sort out injustice (Malachi 2:17). Malachi's question in response was "who can endure the day of his coming?" (Malachi 3:1-5). Here in chapters 11-13, Jesus comes as the Lord of his temple, and he comes to judge.

2. What does Jesus do on the way to Jerusalem? Why would he do this? Look up Micah 7:1-2 for some clues about its meaning.
3. How do Jesus' words and actions relate in verses 15-17?
4. How do the religious leaders respond? Why is Jesus a threat to them?

Read Mark 11:20-25 [Day 3 in Jerusalem]

These verses return to the topic of the cursed fig tree, forming a "sandwich" structure with the temple scene in the middle.

5. What connections can you see between Jesus' actions in the temple and his interactions with the fig tree? How does the fig tree episode help us understand the meaning of Jesus' actions in the temple?

In verses 22-25 we encounter some teaching about prayer. But to avoid misunderstanding it, we need to think about why Jesus would choose this tense moment to teach about prayer.

6. Can you find a place where prayer has been mentioned in the previous section? Why might the disciples be feeling uncertain about prayer after what Jesus has just did?
7. In verse 23 Jesus talks about "this mountain" being thrown into the sea, which suggests it might be more than just a figure of speech. Considering where Jesus has just visited, which elevated location could he be talking about?
8. The rest of the Bible stops us from assuming that verses 23-24 give us carte blanche to get anything we want, if we believe hard enough. What lessons *can* we learn from this section to guide us in our prayer lives?

Read Mark 11:27 - 12:12

Jesus has returned to Jerusalem and is again in the Temple courts where the chief priests, teachers of the Law and elders have gathered together to lend weight to their public challenge of Jesus.

9. When they ask him about authority, how does Jesus frustrate their intention to discredit him?

Notes & Prayer Points

10. Jesus tells a parable about a vineyard. His hearers would have recognised the connection to Isaiah 5:1-7 – “the vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel”. What does the parable reveal about:
 - a. The purpose of ancient Israel and their intended relationship with God

 - b. Ancient Israel’s treatment of God

 - c. Jesus’ mission as God’s son

11. The parable was firstly about God’s dealings with Israel. But can you see how the story also matches God’s interactions with humanity as a whole? Read this way, what warning does this parable raise for all humans?

12. Our church vision (see p2) centres around people “encountering Jesus”. What things does this passage show us about the true Jesus that people need to encounter?

Study 5: Mark 12:13-37

1. **Warming up:** Can you think of a time when someone has asked you a really difficult or confronting question? What different motivations can lie behind the asking of questions?

Read Mark 12:13-17

2. The Pharisees and Herodians ask Jesus a question. What makes this such a dangerous question to answer?
3. How did Jesus's reply disarm his opponents? Why was this such a clever reply?
4. What does this incident teach us about our responsibility to both God and secular rulers?

Read Mark 12:18-27

The Sadducees were a group who only accepted the first 5 books of the Old Testament and rejected the ideas of resurrection or afterlife. They use the Old Testament practice of 'levirate marriage' (See Deut. 25:5-6) to concoct a loaded question for Jesus.

5. How did Jesus reply to their question? Explain his reply. Why would he refer them to God's words to Moses at the burning bush?

Read Mark 12:28-34

6. Do you think this teacher of the law expected Jesus to reply as he did? Why?

7. Do you ever feel like there is a conflict between loving God and loving your neighbour? How do we hold these two together, and in the right order?

Read Mark 12:35-37

8. Having been asked a series of hostile questions, Jesus now asks a curly question of his own. He refers to a passage from Psalm 110.
 - a. Can you explain, in your own words, the conundrum he's pointing out?
 - b. Knowing what you know about Jesus, can you give an answer to his question?

Wrapping up: Look at the 4 incidents together

9. How do people respond after Jesus answers or speaks? Find the verses that describe this.

10. From these four incidents, what can we learn from the way Jesus answered his opponents that could help us in answering those who challenge us about our faith?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 6: Mark 12:38-13:2 and 14:1-11

1. Warming up:
 - a. “The Lord loves a cheerful giver, not a careful one”. Do you agree?
 - b. Is it right or wrong to be so generous that we can’t feed ourselves? How much is too much?

Read Mark 12:38 – 13:2 [the end of day 3 in Jerusalem]

2. What does Jesus condemn the teachers of the law for? Does anything in this list surprise you?
3. People sometimes point to the widow donating her last two copper coins as an example we should follow. Look at how Jesus describes the event. Does he actually commend her?
4. Look at what comes before and after the ‘generous widow’ episode. How do you think these three parts relate?

Dr. Ched Myers offers a less traditional but quite compelling interpretation:

“The final temple episode provides Jesus with an object lesson concerning such exploitation of widows (12:41-44). Jesus sits opposite the treasury (12:41) ... Ever class-conscious, Mark emphasizes the contrast between the large contributions placed in the till by the rich and the meagre sums by the poor (12:41f). Infuriated by a widow who has been made destitute by her tithing obligation, Jesus summons his disciples for another solemn teaching (12:43f). His comment here – “She has put in everything she had, her whole sustenance!” – has typically been trivialized by churchly commentators as a commendation of the superior piety of the poor, when in fact it is a scathing indictment. Jesus considers her impoverishment to be an example of “the devouring of a widow’s house.” The Temple, like the scribal class, no longer protects the poor, but crushes them. His critique of the political economy of the Temple and its stewards thus complete, Jesus exits the temple grounds for the last time. (13:1)”¹

5. Do you find this view persuasive?

¹ <https://radicaldiscipleship.net/2021/11/05/the-widows-mite-commendation-or-condemnation/>

6. Part of our church vision (see p2) is for people to be “nurtured through the stages of life”. Is there anything in this passage that supports this goal?

In this series we are going to skip over the rest of chapter 13. It's a notoriously tricky passage, and scholars debate whether Jesus is referring to his second coming, the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, his death and resurrection, or some combination of these. Those interested can refer to:

- An article by Ian Paul which compares different interpretations <https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/how-should-we-read-mark-13/>
- Tom Barrett's 2021 sermon on the parallel passage in Matthew 24: <https://allsaintsepping.org/sermons/signs-and-the-end/>

For now we will skip ahead to another episode that deals with the question of generosity.

Read Mark 14:1-11

We don't know anything much about "Simon the Leper". Perhaps he was a former leper who Jesus had healed. Bethany, just outside Jerusalem, was the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus and Jesus often stayed there (Mark 11:11). We know from John's gospel that this woman who anointed Jesus was actually Mary (John 12:1-11).

7. What do you think was in the mind of this woman as she broke the jar of perfume and poured it all over the head of Jesus?
8. What was the reaction of all those present at the meal? Do you agree with them?
9. What did Jesus read into this act?

10. This woman's action expressed her deep devotion to Jesus in what he described as “a beautiful thing”. How can we express devotion to Jesus today?

11. Jesus says the anointing, which points to his burial, will be ongoing part of the proclamation of the gospel. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-5. How is the burial of Jesus a significant part of the gospel?

Reflect:

12. Compare this woman with the widow in the temple (12:38-44). What similarities can you see? What are the differences?
13. In a society like ours where money is plentiful, what do these stories teach us about generosity?
14. All Saints seeks to become a church that is “engaged with our community” (see page 2). Can you think of opportunities for us to exercise generosity in a way that points to Jesus?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 7: Mark 14:12-26

Warming Up

1. What are the main ideas that Christians have about the meaning of the Lord's supper?

Read Mark 14:12-26

The festival of unleavened bread was a week-long celebration marking the Israelites' escape from Egypt. The Passover was a special meal on the first night of the festival, remembering how the Lord 'passed over' Israelite houses with the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. See Exodus 12.

2. How would you react if you knew you were about to be betrayed by a close friend? How does Jesus respond differently?
3. How do we see Jesus in control in this passage, despite the plot against him nearing its climax?
4. How do the dinner guests respond when Jesus tells them that one of them will betray him?
5. Consider Jesus' statement in verse 21. How do we see both human responsibility and divine sovereignty at work here?

6. Look at verses 22-25. If you were one of the disciples, and you had grown up with the Passover tradition, how would you feel in that moment?

7. What new meaning does Jesus give to the Passover meal?

Notes & Prayer Points

Reflection:

8. The last supper is the basis for the Christian practice of the Lord's supper (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:26). What are the benefits of the Lord's Supper for us as Christians? What mindset can help us be truly nourished when we celebrate the Lord's supper?

9. How can celebrating the Lord's supper help us in pursuing our church vision? (see page 2)

Pray together:

- Pray that God will help us to be grateful for what Jesus has done for us!
- Pray that as we celebrate the Lord's Supper at All Saints, it would be a nourishing experience for us all.

Study 8: Mark 14:27-52

We now enter into the last few days of Jesus' earthly ministry. The mood is sombre as more people begin to fail and desert him.

1. Can you think of Christian people who have stood firm for Jesus when others around them were unable to do so? Have you ever found yourself in a situation in which you wanted to stand firm for Jesus but ultimately were afraid to do so?

Read Mark 14:27-31

2. What warning does Jesus give here, and what promise does he make?
3. Peter responds to the warning given in verse 27 rather than the promise of verse 28. What do you think about his protestations?

Read Mark 14:32-42

4. Jesus asks three particular disciples to come with him to pray. Look back at verses 29&31 and at Mark 10:38-40. What do these three disciples have in common?
5. Bearing in mind Jesus' understanding of his purpose, what do his prayers reveal about his feelings?

6. How do Jesus' disciples obey and support him in this passage?

Read Mark 14:43-52

7. How do Jesus' disciples obey and support him in this section?
8. What is Jesus' attitude to what's going on?
9. In what ways do we sometimes flee from the challenge of admitting we know Jesus? How could a deeper understanding of who Jesus is encourage us to be more deliberate in living openly for him in our family, workplace and community?

Notes & Prayer Points

Study 9: Mark 14:53 - 15:15

1. **Warming up:** Have you ever been falsely accused of anything? How did you feel? What was the outcome?

Today we see Jesus on trial, twice. The first trial was before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, which had a great deal of authority but could not impose the death penalty. For that, they had to find a charge on which to bring Jesus before the Roman governor.

Read Mark 14:53-65

2. At first Jesus remained silent. Why might he do this?
3. Read Isaiah 53:7-12, the famous passage about the “suffering servant”. Can you see ways in which Jesus, on trial, is fulfilling this?
4. In verse 61b, the high priest asks Jesus bluntly, “are you the Messiah?” and finally Jesus speaks. Previously in Mark, Jesus has wanted his identity as messiah kept quiet. Why would he now speak up?
5. The court condemns Jesus for blasphemy – “speaking badly about God”. Is he actually guilty of this?

While Jesus is on trial inside the Sanhedrin, Peter is undergoing a different kind of trial outside.

Read Mark 14:66-72

6. Who recognised that Peter was a follower of Jesus? What was her position in the social hierarchy?
7. Try to describe the emotions that Peter went through during this exchange.

Notes & Prayer Points

8. Why do you think he responded as he did? What broke him?
9. Does Peter's denial surprise you? What do you think you would have done under similar circumstances?

Read Mark 15:1-15

10. What did the Chief Priests accuse Jesus of? Could any of these accusations be substantiated?
11. How did it eventuate that Barabbas was released and Jesus was condemned to death? What motivated the crowd to shout, "Crucify him"?
12. Why would Mark have chosen to include the Barabbas story in his gospel?

Think about the whole section we've read today

13. What is the effect of "sandwiching" the story of Peter's denial in the middle of Jesus on trial?
14. Think about each of the characters in this narrative. Are there any warnings for us as we seek to follow Jesus?
15. Does the picture of Jesus in this section make you want to help all kinds of people encounter him, as our church vision (p2) says?