

Day 15 (Tuesday 18th September)**Read Mark Chapter 3 verses 31 to 35**

The True Kindred of Jesus

We saw yesterday in verse 21 that Christ's family wanted to restrain him because of what others were saying. Now they are trying to get him away from an attentive crowd sitting around him. Christ uses the situation to make a point about His spiritual family. He is not minimising human family relationships. In John 19.26&27 when on the cross, He made a point of looking to the care of His mother. We will see later in Mark 6.3 that many of the neighbours in Nazareth could not see past Christ's human origins.

Questions to think about

1. How close is the relationship between Christ and "whoever does the will of God"? (Verse 35)
2. Was Jesus just an ordinary man born brought up in a human family in Nazareth? What evidence is there that He wasn't?
3. What is our family position before God if Jesus is our brother? Maybe take a moment to just begin to take in just what an amazing position we are in if we are children of God, our Heavenly Father.

A Prayer you may want to say

Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Help us as we seek to know and do your will. Reveal your will to us through your word in the Bible and help us to do it. Thank you that we have been lovingly adopted into your family. Amen

Day 16 (Wednesday 19th September)**Read Mark Chapter 4 verses 1 to 9**

The Parable of the Sower

Chapters 1 to 3 have presented Christ as the Lord, the Son of God. Crowds have flocked to see His amazing works: healing the sick, casting out demons, cleansing the leper. Jesus now begins to turn more to those who would listen to what he had to say, rather than just following Him in order to see miracles. He teaches about God's kingdom using parables: human pictures. In the Parable of the Sower, the emphasis is on the seed that fell on the good ground. Small amounts fell elsewhere but lots (verse 8, the word for 'other' is now plural in the Greek) fell into good soil and produced an amazing harvest.

Questions to think about

1. What word does Jesus begin and end with? (verse 3 and 9)
2. We all have ears. Why might we not hear what Jesus is saying? (verse 9)
3. Should we be discouraged because some people won't listen to Christ's message?

A Prayer you may want to say

Lord, open my ears so that I may hear you speaking to me through your word in the Bible. Amen.

Day 17 (Thursday 20th September)**Read Mark Chapter 4 verses 10 to 20**

The purpose of the Parables

Before explaining the Parable of the Sower, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah (6.9&10). We are never going to arrive at the intended outcome of turning to God and being forgiven, by just trusting proudly in our own understanding. We need to humbly submit to Him and allow Him to work in our hearts.

Questions to think about

1. Why do some people hear God's word to them and then turn away from it?
2. What can we do to prevent that happening to us?
3. What could the 'fruit' be that results from our accepting God's word to us.

A Prayer you may want to say

Lord, open my heart that I might let you work in my life. Work on the seed that you have sown in my heart. Establish it firmly within me. Stop me forgetting it when things get difficult. Remind me of it when other things in my life start to take over. Amen.

Day 18 (Friday 21st September)**Read Mark Chapter 4 verses 21 to 25**

A Lamp under a Bushel Basket

When we hear God's word we need to respond to it. If people just listen to God's words without letting them affect them, eventually they become hardened to them and *can't* respond. When we respond, God shows us even more from His word.

Read verses 24 and 25 again slowly, asking God to make them clear to you. Read them allowing time for God to speak through them.

Questions to think about

1. "To those who have, more will be given" (verse 25). Does this make sense if it refers to *having* the willingness to respond and being *given* more understanding?
2. God's word in the Bible is described as "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119. 105). How often should we read it?
3. On a dark night, with a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, what do we need to do to get home?

A Prayer you may wish to say

Lord, help me to walk in your ways. Show me through your word the way that I should go and give me the strength to keep walking in it. Amen.

Day 19 (Saturday 22nd September)**Read Mark Chapter 4 verses 26 to 29**

The Parable of the Growing Seed

To get a crop from seed, we have to plant the seeds in the right conditions and harvest the crop when it has grown. The plants actually grow by themselves. In verse 14 of this chapter, Jesus explained that God's Word (The Bible) is like seeds. We are like the sower. We spread the word and later gather the harvest. It is God's Kingdom though and He makes the seed grow.

Questions to think about

1. How might we be spreading seeds of God's Word?
2. We may not see any result immediately from what we have done. Should we worry?
3. What do you think God is saying to you in this section of His Word?

A prayer you may wish to say

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Heavenly Father, thank you that you have given us the seed of your Word. Make it grow in our lives, we pray, and make us a blessing to those around us. Amen.

Day 20 (Sunday 23rd September)**Read Mark Chapter 4 verses 30 to 34**

The parable of the Mustard seed

We tend to think of mustard and cress *seedlings* but mustard plants by the River Jordan grow into tall shrubs. The first point in this parable is the growth of a small seed into a great shrub. But birds then nest in the shrub. In Christ's first parable of the Sower, He compared birds eating the seed on the path with Satan taking the word away from people (Mark 4.15).

Questions to think about

1. If the Kingdom of God grows like a mustard seed, how should we feel about our little contribution to spreading the word?
2. Is there anything we might be doing or not doing that might cause people to lose an initial enthusiasm to hear God's word?
3. Jesus has twice mentioned 'the kingdom of God' now. Kingdoms belong to kings. Who is ruling in our lives?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord Jesus, we are sorry if there have been times when we have done things that have not helped the spread of your kingdom. Thank you that you can take our tiny efforts to spread your word and use them to do amazing things. Amen

Day 21 (Monday 24th September)

read Mark Chapter 4 verses 35 to 41

Jesus Stills a Storm

The disciples have heard the authority of Christ's teaching and seen His power in His healing and cleansing miracles. Now comes a real test to their faith. How much do they trust Him as the Son of God? He has told them they are going across to the other side of the lake (verse 35). He is with them (verse 36) and He is so at peace in His Father's care that He can sleep (verse 38). Three good reasons for them to be unafraid. But instead they think He doesn't care about them.

Questions to think about

1. Have you ever thought God doesn't care what's happening to you? (verse 38).
2. Just how much authority does Jesus have? (verse 39).
3. The chapter finishes with the question: "Who then is this?". What is your answer?

A prayer you may wish to say

My Lord and my God, You are mighty beyond anything on this earth. Strengthen my faith that is so weak. Thank you that you are with us whatever may happen to us. Amen