

Day 50 (Tuesday 23rd October)**Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 1 to 12**

Teaching about Divorce

Divorce was a hot topic at the time. John the Baptist had highlighted Herod Antipas' unlawful marriage. Deuteronomy 24.1 said a man must give his wife a certificate of divorce if he found "something objectionable" about her. He couldn't just turn her out. Rabbis differed over what the objectionable thing could be. The Pharisees wanted to trip Jesus up. They thought He wouldn't be able to answer their question without upsetting at least one group. Christ points out that Moses' law was given to allow for mankind's fallen nature but that God's ideal was life long marriage. He also finished by saying something unheard of at the time, that women were equal to men in terms of status before God.

Questions to think about

1. Does God's ideal for marriage have mankind's best interest's at heart? (verses 7 to 9)
2. Is it wrong to bring questions to God? What was the mistake of the Pharisees?
3. How is our failure to come up to God's ideals related to the journey that Christ had embarked upon?

A prayer you may wish to say

Heavenly Father, we are sorry that we have failed to come up to your ideals in all sorts of ways. Thank you that Christ went all the way to Jerusalem to die for our sins. Thank you that You loved us this much and will always love us. Thank you that You will never let us go. Amen

Day 51 (Wednesday 24th October)**Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 13 to 16**

Jesus Blesses Little Children

Once again, the disciples haven't listened. Having just been taught, with practical demonstration, "Whoever welcomes one such child welcomes me" (Mark 9.37), they *stop* the children coming! Christ takes the teaching further: we all need to come into God's Kingdom like little children. We need to enjoy things even though we don't understand them, trustingly accept our security, cry out to our Heavenly Father when something seems wrong. Little children also happily take what is given to them and don't believe they have to earn it themselves. God *gives* us His salvation.

Questions to think about

1. A baby is totally dependant on its parent. How dependent are we on God?
2. The disciples probably thought they were helping give Jesus some rest. Are we looking into the Bible in order to justify what we are already doing or in order to learn what to do now?
3. How good are we at remembering what we have been taught? What can we remember of what we have been taught this week?

A prayer you may wish to say

Heavenly Father, thank you that you patiently keep teaching us, like little children who keep getting things wrong. Please help us to learn. Thank you for your totally unmerited grace that saved us. Amen

Day 52 (Thursday 25th October)**Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 17 to 22**

The Rich Man

Though very interested in Jesus, this man had three problems. First, he just saw Christ as a good teacher. Second, he thought receiving eternal life was dependant upon our doing good things. Third, in spite of what he said, like all of us, when trying to do good things he failed to keep even the first of God's commandments: "I am the Lord your God.....you shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20.3). His money was the most important thing in his life. It has been said that you can't open your hand to receive something when it is tightly clasped around something else. Eternal life is God's free gift to us, "by grace.....through faith" (Ephesians 2.8). Tragically, the man went away sad.

Questions to think about

1. Looking at us, what would someone else say was the most important thing in our life? Would they say it was the Kingdom of God?
2. The man was very respectful, kneeling before Christ. What more is needed?
3. Children normally 'inherit' (v17) when someone dies. Who was going to die here and who are the children?

A prayer you may wish to say

Heavenly Father, thank you that you love us so much "that we should be called children of God" (1John 3.1). Thank you that you loved us so much that Christ died for our sins. Thank you that in spite of our not deserving anything, you have given us everything, even eternal life. Please help us to respond to you in obedience and love. Amen

Day 53 (Friday 26th October)**Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 23 to31**

Leaving things behind

Jesus has to come first in our lives. Following Him may mean there are other things that we need to leave behind. God knows this can be difficult for us but He enables us to do it. What we gain, both now and in the age to come, is hundreds of times more valuable, though for some Christians, following Christ may also mean suffering because we bear His name. That doesn't mean we expect any more from God. The Labourers in The Vineyard (a parable in Matthew chapter 20 which also finishes with the first being last) all got the same wages. That's God's generosity.

Questions to think about

1. Have you left anything behind as a Christian? Is there anything you need to leave behind?
2. Do we look as if we are people who have received something hundreds of times more valuable?
3. How can we support those Christians in parts of the world where persecution is definitely part of their life now?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord, please help us to keep following you as the most important thing in our lives. Keep showing us the infinite value of what you give to us, so that we might radiate that sense to those around us. Give that sense especially to all persecuted Christians and help us to support them in prayer and concern. Amen

Day 54 (Saturday 27th October)**Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 32 to 34**

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Jesus had broached the subject twice already. First, He had foretold His suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. He had said his disciples had to take up *their* cross and follow Him (Mark 8.31-34). That time Peter had rebuked Him. On the second occasion, He had added the fact that He would be betrayed (Mark 9.31). That time the disciples didn't understand Him. Now He explains He is going to be killed in Jerusalem, where they are going and it will be the Gentiles who kill Him after mocking Him, spitting on Him and flogging Him.

Questions to think about

1. Why was Jesus so determined to go through with this?
2. Christ's death was not something the disciples wanted to hear about. Why might that have been?
3. Which is more important: to tell people about Christ's teaching or to tell them about His death? Why?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord, thank you for giving your life for us so that we could be forgiven and have everlasting life. Please help us to understand the love that made you prepared to go all the way to the Cross. Please help us as we now try to tell others of that love. Amen

Day 55 (Sunday 28th October)**Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 35 to 45**

The Request of James and John

Mark's Gospel has entered a new phase. The emphasis in the first half was on who Jesus is and His ministry of service on Earth: now it is on the life Jesus has come to give up. The disciples still have no comprehension of this side of things. If Jesus is the Son of God, what's in it for them, they wonder. They make wild assertions about what they are prepared for. Christ tells them He is different to Earthly Lords. In the Kingdom of God, the greatest will be those who serve. He has come to give His life so that many others will go free.

Questions to think about

1. The disciples became very different later. What sort of people does Jesus choose to follow Him?
2. What would be your answer to the question "What is it that you want me to do for you?" (v36)
3. Being ransomed (v45) implies we were formerly held captive. In what way were we held captive?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord, thank you for dying to rescue us from the sins that controlled us. Thank you that we are now free to live unselfish lives of service to others. Please change us into the people you want us to be. Help us to see what You want to teach us. Amen

Day 56 (Monday 29th October)

Read Mark Chapter 10 verses 46 to 52

The healing of Blind Bartimaeus

This is the last healing miracle of Jesus that Mark records. Mark describes a real event that happened at Jericho; it can also be viewed symbolically of us however. A blind beggar calls out to Jesus, 'Son of David' – a reference to the promised Messiah (whom the prophet Isaiah had said would open the eyes of the blind, Isaiah 35.5). The beggar leaves all he has (his cloak) behind. In contrast to the disciples yesterday, he answers Christ's question "What do you want me to do for you?" with "let me see again". His faith is rewarded. His sight is restored and he then follows Jesus.

Questions to think about

1. Spiritually, we are like beggars with no means of paying for our ransom from sin (verse 45). What had Jesus said about leaving things behind when we come to Him? (Look back at verses 29-30.)
2. What can we see when Jesus opens our eyes?
3. In what way does our faith make us well? (verse 52)

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord Jesus Christ, open our eyes to see what we need to learn. We want, above all else, to follow you. Thank you for the new abundant life you give us when we put our trust in you. Amen