

Day 36 (Tuesday 9th October)**Read Mark Chapter 8 verses 1 to 10**

Feeding the Four Thousand

Mark is not just repeating a previous account here: he mentions both events later in verse 19 & 20. There are a number of differences – a significant one being that Jesus was now among the Gentiles. His 'bread of heaven' is for all people. In view of the previous miraculous feeding, it is remarkable that the disciples still ask "How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?"

Questions to think about

1. Some people try to explain away the miraculous nature of these events saying they just show that when people share everyone has enough. If Jesus is God, can miracles happen?
2. When tempted to just produce bread to show He was the Son of God, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8.3 "one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Matthew 4.4). Should we just be seeking our material needs? What should we be doing as well?
3. Like the disciples, do we sometimes see God do amazing things, but then forget it?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord God, thank you that you came for all people, including us. We are sorry that so often we look for our physical needs and forget our need to feed on your word in the Bible. Forgive us too that we are so slow to see just how amazing you are, even when you bless us in so many ways. Amen

Day 37 (Wednesday 10th October)**Read Mark Chapter 8 verses 11 to 13**

The Demand for a Sign

The Pharisees had been exposed as hypocrites by Jesus (Mark 7.6). They now want to expose Him as a fraud. Miracles like feeding crowds, healing the sick and raising the dead were not good enough for them: they wanted a 'sign from heaven'. Ironically there had been just such a sign. When Jesus was publicly baptised in the Jordan, a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1.11). The Pharisees had just not heard it.

Questions to think about

1. Are we still looking for 'signs' – other than ones that have already been given?
2. What is our response to having shortcomings or sin exposed in our lives? Do we repent or do we attack the person who exposes us?
3. What was Christ's response to the Pharisees demand? (verse 13)

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord God, forgive us for the times when we have failed to see and hear all your words to us. We cling to you promise: "anyone who comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6.37). Please keep us close to you and help us learn what you would teach us. Amen.

Day 38 (Thursday 11th October)**Read Mark Chapter 8 verses 14 to 21**

The Yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod

Christ uses a seemingly simple event – forgetting the bread, to give an important warning. Don't fall prey to the outlooks of Herod and the Pharisees because they will take over your life if you are not careful. Herod's trap was worldliness – setting the pleasures of this world above all else. The Pharisees' trap was hypocrisy – saying one thing and doing another. The disciples however didn't understand. They had even forgotten how Jesus had miraculously just met everyone's needs.... twice.

Questions to think about

1. The thing with yeast is that a tiny amount eventually works through a whole batch of dough. What do we need to do as soon as we see ourselves being snared?
2. What blessings have you received from God in this last week?
3. Why is it important for us to remember what God has done for us in the past?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord God, keep us from hypocrisy and just seeking the pleasures of this world. Thank you for all the ways in which you have sought us, protected us and provided for us in the past. Please help us to remember all your past blessings and so strengthen our trust you for the future. Amen.

Day 39 (Friday 12th October)**Read Mark Chapter 8 verses 22 to 26**

Jesus Cures a Blind Man at Bethsaida

The blind man was not from Bethsaida and Jesus took him out of the village to restore his sight. Afterwards he was told to go home and not back to Bethsaida. The awful truth was that this village had seen Christ's deeds of power but had not repented (Matthew 11.20-24). Like the Pharisees, they were then left to themselves by Christ. The man's full sight did not come immediately. Only after Christ's second touch did he see everything clearly.

Questions to think about

1. What is the danger of repeatedly failing to respond to God's promptings?
2. Could the blind man's transformation be seen as a picture of our own? Do we, like the disciples, not see everything clearly at first?
3. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians wrote "now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Cor 13.12). When do you think he means by 'then'?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord God thank you for the opportunities you give us to respond to you. We are sorry for our slowness to understand things and ask that you would open our eyes more and more to what you would have us see, until that day in heaven when we will know you as you know us. Amen.

Day 40 (Saturday 13th October)

Read Mark Chapter 8 verses 27 to 30

Peter's Declaration about Jesus

We have now come to a crucial half way point in Mark's Gospel: "Who do you say that I am?" We have seen Jesus do amazing, deeply compassionate things and forgive sin. We have seen him teach with a unique authority. People may have all different ideas about who Jesus is: one of the great prophets or teachers maybe, but the question is now put to *us*. Peter's reply was "the Messiah". For Jews, 'Messiah' meant a promised triumphant king (Isaiah 11) and suffering servant (Isaiah 53). The trouble was they were inclined to remember Isaiah 11 and forget Isaiah 53. Jesus may have wanted people to keep quiet about this until they understood both.

Questions to think about

1. The title 'Christ' is just the Greek form of 'Messiah'. Who do you say that Jesus is?
2. What difference does this make in your life?
3. Do we talk about Christ as both Lord of all and Suffering Servant?

A prayer you may wish to say

Almighty God, our Lord and our Saviour, thank you that you have opened our eyes to who you really are. Help us to respond more and more to your lordship and help us to praise you more and more for our salvation. Amen.

Day 41 (Sunday 14th October)

Read Mark Chapter 8 verse 31 to 33

Jesus foretells His death and Resurrection

When we have understood who Jesus is we also need to understand why He came to this earth. His death was no unfortunate end to a promising life. His whole purpose on earth was to willingly suffer and die and then rise again. Peter hadn't yet grasped the whole picture. Having had Christ's true identity revealed to him by God (see Matthew 16.17), he is then used by Satan to tempt Christ to not go through with God's set plan.

Questions to think about

1. Why does Christ only now start to speak of his having to suffer and die?
2. Verse 31 says "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering.....and be killed, and after three days rise again". Why did He have to do this?
3. How can we make sure we are following God's revelation and not Satan's trickery?

A prayer you may wish to say

Loving Lord, thank you that you were prepared to come to this earth in order to suffer and die so that we might be saved. Thank you that you reveal your word to us in the Bible. Please help us understand it better. Keep us from arguing with your word to us. Amen.

Day 42 (Monday 15th October)

Read Mark Chapter 8 verse 34 to Chapter 9 verse 1

The cost of discipleship

Having told about His own coming death, Christ now warns that those who want to follow Him must also be prepared to hand over control of their life to Him, giving themselves to be bearers of His good news ('gospel'). This could result in them, like Christ, paying a heavy price in this world but being disciples will also mean that they will join Christ in His glory when He returns. Handing control to Christ will mean freedom from being controlled by sin. There are different interpretations of Mark 9.1. One possibility is that Christ is referring to Pentecost when power came on the disciples with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Questions to think about

1. Do we have sins that we still want to hang on to?
2. How much will 'the whole world' (including all our possessions) be worth to us when we die?
3. "What can they give in return for their life?" (verse 37). Is it possible for us to redeem ourselves?

A prayer you may wish to say

Lord, we want to follow you. Rule over our lives and use us to show your good news to the world. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.