

Tuesday, October 27, 2020—Mark 14-16

Humans notice outward action. Humans are judgmental creatures. They tend to make impulsive assessments and decisions. For example, the disciples were terribly bothered by the woman's wasting of perfume on Jesus. They calculated the cost of the perfume.

Jesus, however, examined the intentions of her heart. The money could have assisted many poor people; the disciples were correct, but her actions could only have been expressed in the moment. The disciples would always have the poor to assist, but they would not always have Him. She responded to who He was. This is true worship—expressing His worth. Their indignation placed more value on the perfume than on Jesus.

In contrast to her anointing Jesus, the disciples ran away. In measuring the value of their lives compared to His, they found theirs to be more valuable. Peter tried to overcome his personal fear and stay close to the proceedings, but he denied knowing Jesus three times, just as Jesus predicted. The chief priests and the crowd found their opinions and the murderous rebel Barabbas to be more valuable than Jesus. Jesus found the Father's will to be more valuable than His own life, so He willingly laid it down. The condition of the heart eventually becomes evident.

The death of Jesus broke their hearts, but His resurrection and their faith changed them. They went from sorrow to joy. They laid down their selfish motives and risked everything for Him. The inner root began to produce visible fruit, just as Jesus intended.

Praise God for the heart-transforming power of Jesus.

Monday, October 26, 2020—Mark 11-13

Appearances can be deceiving. Jesus came in as a triumphant king, yet He was on a borrowed colt. He was not who the people thought He was. He was not coming in to conquer Rome but to conquer sin and death.

The people of God were not who they appeared to be. Jesus saw a fig tree in leaf, but it had no fruit. Then, He went to the Temple—a place full of activity—and found no fruit. There were financial transactions but no spiritual interactions. Like the cursed fig tree, Israel was busy but barren.

Jesus told a story to illustrate Israel's condition. A vineyard owner established a fruitful vineyard then went away, renting the space to farmers. When servants came to collect some of the harvest, the renters beat some and killed others, eventually killing the owner's son as well. Jesus said Israel was fulfilling Scripture (12:10-11) by rejecting Him and seeking to kill Him.

The religious leaders continued to challenge Jesus and try to trap Him in His words. Jesus continued to stifle them through wisdom and Scripture and reminded them of the two greatest commandments—love God and love people (12:30-31). God was looking for people whose hearts were like the widow's, seeing God as more valuable than anything (12:41-44). He was calling His people to stay alert, always looking for His return and living with endurance until that day (13:1-37).

Thank God for His word that never passes away (13:31) and the stability and

direction it provides for faithful living.

Sunday, October 25, 2020—Mark 7-10

John Piper once asked, in regards to personal devotional times, “Are you glad you had them or that you heard from Him?” He knew the human tendency is one to measure the outward action instead of the inner impact. This was the emphasis Jesus was making with the Pharisees as He blistered them for putting more emphasis on tradition than true holiness (7:9). Evil could reside in the heart of anyone who appeared wholesome.

Jesus did most of His ministry and performed most of His miracles with His people, the Jews, but occasionally He worked wonders outside those ethnic lines (7:24-8:13). He did so to augment His teaching about pure hearts and true faith versus outward religion. He wanted the gospel to change the lives of everyone who believed—Jew or Gentile.

Peter demonstrated the ongoing work required for mature faith. He confessed Jesus as the Chosen One of God and soon thereafter rebuked Jesus for saying He would have to die (8:27-38). Peter had an understanding of the gospel but was far from complete in his growth. The disciples altogether were far from being mature though they had spent so much time with Jesus (9:1-37). Jesus wanted His disciples to remain childlike (10:13-16)—longing to be with Him and continually growing in knowledge and wonder. Nothing and no one was as great as Jesus Himself (10:17-22). All who followed Him were to live as servants (10:43).

Thank God for giving Jesus and His Holy Spirit so we can know Him and serve Him. Pray for humility to hear, grow, and serve daily.

Saturday, October 24, 2020—Mark 4-6

Teachers don’t do their jobs simply because they like to talk. They want to bring change in knowledge, attitude, values, and skills. Students who do not change are not learning. They are, at best, only listening.

Jesus taught to bring transformation, but He knew many of those who heard Him would not have the desire to change. They might listen. Many would ignore Him. To stir those who truly listened, Jesus would teach in parables (4:2)—earthly stories with heavenly meanings. He wanted them to hear and to want to know more about its deeper truth (4:10, 34). Their pursuit of Him and His answers would bring the change He intended. Others would be distracted and deterred by trouble, persecution, worry, deceit, or desire and never see fruit come from Jesus’ good news.

Jesus taught truth, and He commanded nature. He told a storm to stop and demons to flee. His disciples were afraid, and the crowds were amazed. A religious leader and a forgotten woman—representing polar opposites—both believed in His power, and Jesus rewarded their faith. Jesus sought to transform, but He continually proved that no one should grow comfortable around His holiness and power.

Knowing Jesus and following Him develops great power (6:13-14) but also presents great risks (6:14-29). In moments when Jesus could have been selfish, He looked on people with compassion (6:34, 43-56). Jesus continually showed the transforming power of the gospel. He did not ignore circumstances. He just did not let

them dictate faith or obedience.

Pray for a life that demonstrates His transforming power.

Friday, October 23, 2020—Mark 1-3

In a fast-paced world, Mark's Gospel is most appropriate. Mark wrote for a Roman audience. He wanted them to know the facts as succinctly as possible. He moved quickly through the story of Jesus, and he often had Jesus moving quickly from scene to scene.

The Roman audience did not need the lengthy genealogy that Matthew provided for his Jewish audience. Mark simply noted God had said some 700 years before Jesus that He would send a messenger to prepare the way for His Chosen One. John the Baptist was that messenger, calling people to repentance (1:4) and promising the Holy Spirit.

After His temptation, Jesus went to work, calling His disciples and preaching a message of repentance and belief (1:15). He demonstrated power over spiritual forces and physical disease that captivated those watching and following Him. He spent time alone in prayer and increasingly had to shield Himself from the crowds because His popularity was outpacing His call to repentance and self-denial. Nonetheless, He was able to baffle the religious leaders as He revealed His identity as God in the flesh (2:1-12).

Jesus was doing a new work. He was a doctor going to the sick, the Lamb of God coming to sacrifice Himself for the sinful world. The crowds adored Him, but His family did not understand Him (3:21). The religious leaders hated Him, and the evil spirits feared Him.

Take time to consider who Jesus is to you. Pray for a heart that knows Him and a will that obeys Him.

Thursday, October 22, 2020—Matthew 26-28

Jesus told His disciples several times that He was going to be arrested, crucified, and buried. Jesus wanted them to be prepared to handle the situation. The news was difficult to process for the disciples as they could not imagine this was in any way possible for God's Chosen One.

Jesus shared that reality enough that a woman came and prepared Him for burial by anointing His head with an expensive perfume. She "wasted" an valuable ointment as an expression of her devotion to Him. She saw Jesus as the greatest treasure in her life and acted on it.

Judas, on the other hand, saw a concept as the greatest value. He wanted the Romans overthrown, and he realized Jesus wasn't going to do that, so He betrayed Jesus—wasting Him so He could be poured out. Jesus poured out His blood on the ground at the whipping post and the cross to show that God's Kingdom and will were His greatest value.

Peter denied Him. The leaders unjustly sentenced Him. The crowd condemned Him. The soldiers and robbers insulted Him. All the while, Jesus remained faithful to His calling to pay the price for sin. When God the Son died, the earth shook, and the Temple curtain testified to His value. On Sunday morning the empty tomb demonstrated

His value as well.

Jesus calls His disciples to express His value by making disciples everywhere they go. Pray for God to reveal those in your world who need to know about Jesus so you can lead them to baptism and growth.

Wednesday, October 21, 2020—Matthew 23-25

Since Jesus' time on earth, the world has had mixed reviews of His ministry. Some confess Him as the Chosen One of God. Others view Him as another deluded religious zealot. Many regard Him as a prophet, but almost all agree He was a good teacher, providing principles for a good life.

The world's view might change a bit when examining these three chapters. Jesus provides some of His most scathing commentary for the religious leaders and His most prophetic teaching for His disciples. This is not the passage to find a meek and mild teacher. These are not the verses that provide catchy quotes for wall art or easy-living life principles.

Jesus was in His final week before His crucifixion, so time was short. He declared seven woes (23:1-39) over the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees to make clear their standing before God. They were leading people astray by their teaching and example. Their goal and motivation were not a relationship with God and His glory but a fulfillment of rules and their own glory. This was not God's desire for His people.

On the Mount of Olives Jesus told His disciples the end of the age would come and all that seemed stable would fall. They asked him for the signs of that time and the time frame for its arrival (24:3). Jesus gave them the answer in scenes echoed in Daniel and Revelation that call all of Jesus' followers to daily discipleship and faithful endurance until He returns.

Repent of hypocrisy. Walk faithfully. Endure to the end.