



Theme: Jesus and the Earliest Gospel... Mark

"The Most Important Things"

Weekly Memory Verse: *"Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."*—
Mark 12:31b

Family Activity for the Week: Do you remember a time when someone did something nice for you, an unexpected nicety that came out of nowhere, just when you needed it most? We don't always know what is going on in someone's life, so these acts of kindness can go a long way to make a person feel seen and loved. Jesus says, "Love your neighbor as yourself", just after He tells us to love God with all of our being. Do you think this might be important? I know I have had family activities before about random acts of kindness, but no matter how many times you do this, it does not become any less important. Take the time this week to do something nice for someone else, (i.e. making a card, gifting flowers, buying someone's groceries, washing the car, etc.) and acknowledge the lightness in your own spirit afterwards. Give your step a little pep this Spring through loving others!

During this season of Lent, the 40 days and 7 Sundays before Easter, we will be reading the entire Gospel of Mark, which is the earliest gospel. The reading plan will give you about a half a chapter a day and then some questions to reflect upon. We pray the Holy Spirit will touch your heart as you make this journey with us!

Monday, March 22 – Read Mark 10:32-45. "Jesus and his disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem." Jesus had been speaking plainly early in Mark 8:32 about why he was going to Jerusalem for some time. But James, John, and all the disciples still thought he must be going there to declare himself king, raise an army, drive out the Romans and set up God's eternal kingdom on earth. The brothers thought they'd make their bid for power before the other disciples. "You don't know what you're asking!" Jesus said. In Heaven's kingdom, there is no status seeking. In my kingdom, we serve.

- ▲ We know (as James and John did) what earthly importance, power and privilege look like. Down deep, most of us would like to have at least some of those things. Jesus' teaching about his kingdom was clear: "that's not the way it will be with you." Jesus said he didn't come to be served, but to serve, even to the extent of giving his life. In what specific ways does choosing to follow Jesus change your approach to life?
- ▲ Jesus said: "The ones who are considered the rulers by the Gentiles show off their authority over them and their high-ranking officials order them around." That kind of power can be a "high." But Jesus went on, "Whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant." Where do you have power (parent, boss, teacher, pastor, public office, etc.)? Do you most often use your power to serve others, or are you tempted to use it on your own behalf? How can you become more of a "servant leader"?

(Message Notes and Meditation Moments for March 20-21, 2021 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

Prayer: Loving Lord, I'm human. Sometimes I have ambitious dreams and wishes. Keep reshaping me, making those ambitions into ambitions to serve you and others. Amen.

Tuesday, March 23 – Read Mark 11:1-25. The deliberate journey south from Galilee that began in Mark 9:30 reached Jerusalem. Jesus purposely entered in a way that echoed history (see Kings 1:32-39) and prophecy (see Zechariah 9:9-10), a clear claim to peaceful kingship. Lending Jesus a donkey's colt may not sound like a big deal. But in his day, that colt was as important to all but wealthiest families as a car is to us. Sometimes several families pooled resources to buy one animal they all shared.

- ▲ The prophet Zechariah wrote that a righteous king would ride on a donkey's colt and bring Jerusalem salvation and peace. Mark 11:2 indicated that Jesus pre-arranged his ride into Jerusalem to fulfill that prophecy. Who found Jesus' entrance into the holy city offensive (verse 18)? Would you more likely have been with "the establishment" who didn't want the orderly status quo disrupted, or with the upstart rabbi from Galilee?
- ▲ Verse 23-24 showed how Jesus used "hyperbole" (overstatement to make a point) in his teaching. Jesus used that image often—Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6 quoted versions of it in different contexts. Throwing mountains into the sea would not actually advance God's Kingdom. Changing our inner anger and hurt into forgiveness (verse 25) can be a mountainous challenge. In what ways have you sensed God's grace changing you into a more gracious person?

Prayer: Jesus, in this passage I see your holy anger against a trade that exploited pilgrims at Passover time. And I see your assurance that your power can move the "mountain" of my unholy anger against people who offend me. Amen.

Wednesday, March 24 – Read Mark 11:27-12:12. Jesus' vineyard story drew on a beloved Scripture (Isaiah 5:1-7), which called Israel God's vineyard. Jesus told it in sadness, answering people who assumed that their positions and titles gave them the authority to rebuke and refuse him. Jesus loved the people of Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:41-42), but their heedless leaders did not love him. As they plotted his death, Jesus told a story that pointedly exposed the murder in their hearts.

- ▲ Mark 11:18, 28 and 12:12 graphically showed the atmosphere charged with hatred that surrounded Jesus during his last week. We're tempted to look down on the Jerusalem leaders, but like them we're subject to blind spots. Is there anything God's spirit is nudging you to face honestly in your life? Do you have the courage to face it, to grant Jesus the authority to guide you in tending the vineyard of your life?
- ▲ The temple priests and legal experts held all the visible, human power at the Temple. Why didn't they just arrest Jesus on the spot? "They were afraid of the crowd." Jesus didn't blindly follow "the crowd" (see John 2:23-25), but in this case they saw more clearly than the religious leaders. What blocked the leaders' vision? How can you keep your spiritual eyes and ears clear to recognize God's work in either expected or unexpected places?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you've entrusted the gift of life to me, and you ask me to lead that life in a way that bears fruit for your kingdom. Make me a faithful tenant farmer, one who respects and values your lordship. Amen.

Thursday, March 25 – Read Mark 12:13-34. Jesus' enemies tried hard to ask him "no win" questions, for which either answer would get him in trouble. Taxes were as much or more a hot button then as now. But Jesus said it wasn't as simple as a "yes" or "no" answer. There was a valid realm for "Caesar" (human authority), and a citizen's duty to pay taxes fit into that. Yet God's kingdom was larger and higher than human authority, and Jesus clearly indicated that God's kingdom held his (and our) ultimate loyalty.

- ▲ The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection, and they tried their best to make the idea sound ridiculous. Jesus replied by challenging their earthbound assumptions. What made absolute conviction (Message Notes and Meditation Moments for March 27-28, 2021 – For more, go to www.summitdurango.org)

that death was not the end, that “the worst thing is never the last thing,” crucial to Jesus in that week before the cross? Do you share his confidence? If so, in what ways does that assurance shape your day-to-day life for the better?

- ▲ Scholar William Barclay noted that there were two schools of thought among rabbis. Some believed “there were lighter and weightier matters of the law... great principles which were all important to grasp.” Others, “held that every smallest principle was equally binding.” When asked, Jesus was clear about that—he saw some principles as far more vital than others, central to understanding God’s will. What are the implications of Jesus’ answer for how you read your Bible, and how you let it guide your life?

Prayer: O God, you spoke to the human family in many times and many ways. But supremely you spoke to us through a Son. Help me to root all my service to you in the great commandments Jesus identified. Amen.

Friday, March 26 – Read Mark 12:35-44. Jesus turned the elaborate, often technical way the rabbis and legal experts used the Bible to his own ends. “The Christ” was the title for the promised Messiah. Jesus used Psalm 110 to teach that the Messiah was not “just” David’s descendant, but also his eternal Lord. In the Temple Jesus noticed and prized a widow’s devout generosity, such a welcome contrast to the hostile authorities who kept pursuing him.

- ▲ We use the phrase “all in” about a person fully committed to a belief or course of action. How was the widow Jesus saw in the Temple “all in” for God’s kingdom? As with the young ruler in Mark 10:17-27—Jesus did not mean it was wrong to be able to pay bills or buy food. He was honoring a heart that worships and serves God before material goods. In what ways are you “all in” with Jesus? In what ways, if any, are you holding back?
- ▲ N. T. Wright said of the “legal experts,” “They give themselves airs, and have a great reputation for piety, but are only interested in lining their pockets. The world has not changed, it seems. Not only lawyers, but also politicians and other leaders in the civic world, are again and again discovered to be putting on a show to gain favor while underneath they are after money.” What helps you to monitor your motives, to avoid “putting on a show” that doesn’t match your inner reality?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to be honest with myself so that I can be honest with other people and with you. I desire to be “all in” for you as the eternal Lord of my life. Amen.

This is Palm Sunday weekend so please join us for a special worship service in person or online at 5:30 p.m. Saturday or Sunday at 9 a.m. If you worship online, feel free to make your own palm branch so you can wave it with us! You’ll find that [here](#). Register for worship [here](#).

Saturday, March 27 – Read Mark 13:1-20. Herod the Great built the Temple complex in a futile attempt to win the Jewish people’s acceptance. It was the largest, most striking building for miles in any direction. Yet Jesus said none of it would last. That seemed impossible to the disciples. The only set of events they could imagine that would lead to the ruin of the great Temple would be the convulsive events when God made the earth new and purged all that was evil. With clearer insight, Jesus knew that if Israel’s leaders insisted on seeking political, military deliverance, they’d face a catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Roman armies.

- ▲ In 70 A.D., Roman soldiers smashed Jerusalem and the Temple. It was awful—but not the end of the world. Many of Jesus’ words applied locally to Jerusalem’s fall. Others did reach to the end of the age. Note which parts of Jesus’ teaching were more local, and which more cosmic. People often find fearful “signs” in verses 5-8—false messiahs, famines, wars, earthquakes. Some voices say, “The world is about to end.” Jesus said, “Don’t be alarmed” (verse 7) by such things—they’re part of life in a broken world. How can Jesus’ words help you avoid needless fear?

- ▲ The disciples “knew” the Temple was permanent. What “permanent” realities in your world have changed or “shaken” just in the past year? How can trusting God always give you peace about whatever the future holds?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you taught your disciples what the apostle Paul learned: “The things that can be seen don’t last, but the things that can’t be seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Help me to build my life on the solid foundation of your eternal kingdom. Amen.