

## **Week 3: 'Darkness and Passion' Mark 8:27- 15:47**

### **The journey towards the darkness (8:27-10:52)**

- Darkness and threat are now the focus of the journey from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem. Even though Peter confesses Jesus as Messiah (8:29), the disciples find it difficult to come to terms with the crucifixion (8:31-32). Each time Jesus looks towards his coming death (8:31; 9:31; 10:33f) he goes on to explain what this will mean for the disciples; it will be a template for their service. They must be ready to make their own costly sacrifice (8:34-38). At the transfiguration, the voice from heaven says they are to listen to him (9:7). They are to be humble in dealings with others (9:33-41) and rigorous in the way they conduct themselves (9:42-50). They are to live as servants concerned for others and their wellbeing (10:35-45) as he will give his life as a ransom for many (10:45, echoes of Isaiah 53). As this part of the journey is preceded by the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26) so it will end with the restoration of sight to Bartimaeus at Jericho (10:6-52).

### **Evening clouds (11:1-13:37)**

- Jesus approaches and enters Jerusalem triumphantly (11:1-11) entering and disturbing the Temple. Jesus is surrounded by controversy and comes into conflict with the religious leaders and authorities (11:27-12:34). He answers their questions with direct answers until 'no one dared to ask him any question' (12:34).
- Jesus then takes the initiative with his own teaching (12:35-44) and that leads onto chapter 13 where he addresses the disciples seated on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple (13:3).
- Jesus looks to the future when the Temple will be destroyed (13:1f) and when the 'good news' will be proclaimed to all nations (13:10, 26f). With echoes of Daniel 7 Jesus is the 'son of man' who will suffer, and exercise 'authority under God and with God' (Proctor). As the world waits with all these troubles abounding (13:5-23) the disciples are to keep alert and awake and be faithful (13:23, 33, 35, 37).

### **Night and Darkness (14:1-15:47)**

- In Mark's narrative and these last chapters, we now embark on the final part of the journey to the cross.
  - Jesus receives a funeral anointing ahead of time (14:3-9).
  - In the upper room broken bread and shared wine speak of his flesh and blood given in sacrifice (vv22-25).
  - He is handed over to his enemies (vv32-42), arrested (vv43-50), tried (vv53-64, 15:1-5), beaten (14:65; 15:15), mocked (15:16-20, 29-32), crucified (15:21-27), dead (15:33-37) and buried (15:42-47).

- Imagine you are hearing this gospel read as a whole! This was inevitable and part of God's plan and wisdom (8:31; 9:12; 14:21, 49) an innocent death brought about by wrong justice ((14:56, 59; 15:14).
- Jesus knows the path he must take because it is his Father's will (14:41f) but it is a costly and painful decision and God will seem painfully distant (15:34).
- The sun darkens and yet a new dawn will beckon (15:33 cf. 13:24). The Temple curtain is torn in two so access to God is now open to the world (15:38) and in the centurion's words there is a perfect summary of what the gospel has been all about - Jesus is God's son (15:39, cf. 1:11, 9:7).

### **Women on the way**

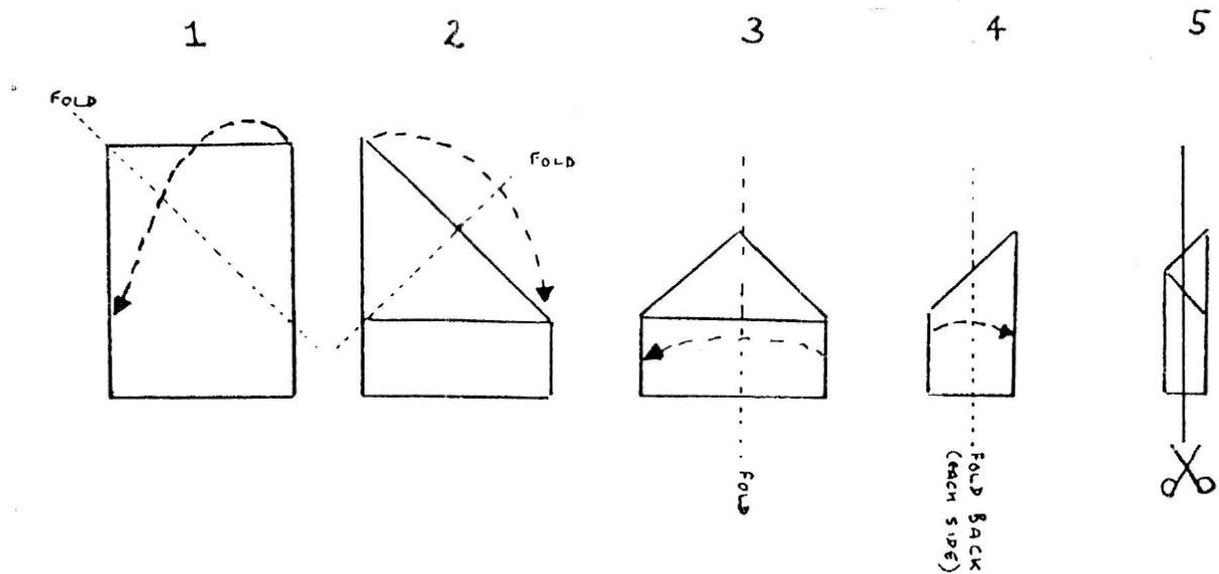
- Mark's gospel shows many women of faith. 'In a society less equal than ours, Jesus crossed the gender boundary, in both the company he kept and the commitment he inspired' (Proctor).
  - Women sit and hear Jesus and do the will of God (3:35).
  - A woman's touch brings healing and opportunity for Jesus to speak of the power of faith (5:27, 34).
  - A bold and persistent mother asks that mercy may reach the gentiles and her daughter is healed (7:24-30).
  - Jesus spoke about marriage and divorce to give women a more secure position (10:2-12).
  - A faithful widow gives all she has in worship to God (12:41-44).
  - A woman lavishes a jar of nard in his anointing (14:3-9)
  - A group of women from Galilee stand at the cross, follow his body to the grave and return on the third day with anointing (15:40f, 47, 16:1f)
  - They are the first to hear that he is risen and take the new back to Peter and the others (16:6f).
  - 'Son of Mary' (6:3)

One scholar, Susan Miller, suggests that the women in Mark's Gospel have three key roles: as examples of what it means to serve, as anointers (both in Mark 14:3–9 and in Mark 16:1–8), and as witnesses to Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection. Given the very close overlap between these three concepts and Mark's key concerns as a writer (one who explores discipleship, the meaning of Jesus' ministry, and the reality of the Resurrection), it is no exaggeration to claim that women are central to this Gospel narrative and occupy an important space in it as they model what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. ( see Julie Smith at <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-17-no-2-2016/marks-unique-contribution>).

# A Good Friday Talk

It is over thirty years since I gave my first Good Friday All Age service talk using a piece of paper, a bit of folding and one cut. The congregation were sent away to do it with a piece of A4 paper and then tell someone else what happened on the first Good Friday.

Follow these instructions .....

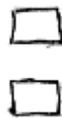


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You then end up with following pieces of paper (not to scale) to tell the story..



This is the cross on which Jesus is nailed and then dies.  
(Mark 15:22-26)



These are the lots cast by the soldiers to divide His clothes.  
(Mark 15:24)



Put these two pieces together to form another cross to tell the story of the two bandits.  
(Mark 15:27)



Put these two pieces together to form the tomb where they laid His body.  
(Mark 15:46)



Put these two pieces together to form the stone laid across the entrance to the tomb  
(Matthew 15:47)