



VILLAGE CHURCH

REDEFINING

MARK

GREATNESS

CHAPTERS 6-10



Study 1

Mark 6:6b-56 | Redefining greatness

In case you haven't heard, the G20 summit will be held in Brisbane at the end of next year in the Convention Centre at Southbank. The most powerful people in the world will be coming to visit our dinky donky city to talk about the global economy.

What do you expect to see when this circus of power comes to town?

The crazy thing about Jesus is that although he has more power than all the world leaders put together and then some, he didn't come with pompous extravagance. He didn't follow the conventions that we typically associate with people who have great power.

And as we look at this chapter of Mark (and the chapters following) we're going to see how Jesus is so radically different to us and what we typically value. He didn't come to be served, but to serve. Yes, he is a king, but he's a king who redefines our idea of greatness.

Read Mark 6:6b-56

In verses 6b-13, Jesus sends out his twelve apostles to the surrounding towns to preach about God's kingdom and repentance.

- 1. Why do you think Jesus didn't want his apostles to bring any necessary supplies with them?**

- 2. Jesus anticipated that the apostles would receive a cold reception in some places. For what reason might a town reject two miracle-healing, demon-exorcising apostles?**

- 3. What is it about Jesus' greatness that causes some people to completely reject him?**

Read Mark 6:14-29

Mark then mentions King Herod, who hears about the commotion the apostles have made about Jesus through their publicity spree.

- 4. Why do you think Herod got Jesus confused for John the Baptist?**
- 5. Look over this section and try to psychoanalyse Herod. What are the characteristics you see in the typical kind of king?**
- 6. There's a distinct contrast between King Herod and Jesus, the one ushering in a new Kingdom. What are the differences that Mark draws out in his account here?**
- 7. Mark records that Herod feared and protected John the Baptist and even liked to listen to him (v20). Why then did he lock him in prison and behead him? It seems an odd contradiction, but is this a common approach to God and/or Jesus (i.e. Intrigued but arms-length)?**

Read Mark 6:30-44

The fact that news about Jesus has gone viral meant that the apostles were so busy they didn't even have time to eat. Jesus calls timeout for a private picnic, but it gets gate-crashed by over 10,000 people (5000 men plus women and children). In contrast to the disciples, Jesus has compassion on them.

- 8. How does Jesus' reaction to the uninvited crowds (v34) demonstrate his different kind of greatness?**
- 9. Do you think the disciples had legitimate reason to be worried when Jesus asked them to feed the massive crowd? Why or why not?**

Read Mark 6:45-52

While Jesus dismisses the crowd, he sends his disciples to the other side of the lake in a boat.

- 10. Why wasn't Jesus originally in the boat with the disciples? What's the significance of this?**

- 11. Mark writes that the disciples were amazed because they had not understood about the loaves (v51&52). What hadn't they understood?**

- 12. What does it mean to have a hard heart?**

- 13. Why were the disciples having a hard time comprehending Jesus' greatness?**

Read Mark 6:53-56

As soon as they get to the other side of the lake, they are swamped with sick people who just want to touch Jesus to get better.

- 14. Why were these people so desperate to see Jesus?**

- 15. Do you think your situation in life affects how you see Jesus?**

- 16. During which seasons of your life does Jesus' greatness seem the most clear to you?**

Study 2

Mark 7 | A Heart Problem

So far in the Gospel of Mark we've read about Jesus performing miracles, healing people, raising a young girl from the dead and speaking in parables to those around him. We've read about numerous people in need who flock to Jesus to be healed. But Chapter 7 shows Jesus starting to explain how those who look so religious and upright can plot the death of a man who has brought so much hope to Israel (See Mark 3:6). They plot his death...but still manage to find some time to complain about his disciples hygiene.

Read chapter 7 v1-23.

1. **What issues do the Pharisees and men of the law have with Jesus' disciples in verses 2-5?**

Here's what James Edwards says in 'The Gospel according to Mark':

... According to the OT, only priests were required to wash before entering the tabernacle (Exod 30:9; 40:13; Lev 22:1-6); otherwise the washing of hands – the point of contention in v.2 – was described only if one had touched a bodily discharge (Lev 15:11).

It seems the Pharisees have taken scripture and over time added to it as they see fit. In fact they've added so much to it that Jesus and his disciples would be classified as more unclean than even lepers (1:40), tax collectors (2:13) or Gentiles (5:1).

2. **What kinds of 'traditions' do you see in Churches today?**
3. **In verses 6-9, what does Jesus say the traditions have replaced?**

Jesus then goes on to explain how where the Pharisees are going wrong in verses 10-13. Rather than the Pharisees selling their land to help out (care for) their parents, they could claim it as a gift to God (*Corban*) which to them meant that they could keep the land their whole life until they died, *THEN* it would be passed on to God.

4. **With this understanding of *Corban*, discuss how Jesus arrives at the conclusion that the Pharisees are 'nullifying the word of God' (v13).**
5. **Do you think it's possible to have traditions that enhance a relationship with God, or do they always diminish it?**

6. What traditions do you/we have that are helpful, and which are unhelpful?

Jesus says that the Pharisees look like they're saying all the right things and to others they look the part, except their hearts are closed to Jesus. All of their "good" acts of service come from a desire not to serve God but themselves.

7. In verses 14-15, Jesus explains what makes a man clean and what makes him unclean. What does he say? Do you think people today believe that?

8. Why do you think the Pharisees would be so attached to traditions? What do these traditions do (or hide) from them?

9. Are there traditions / habits / attitudes that we hang on to in order to cover up bigger problems and struggles in our lives? What do Jesus words have to say about that?

It's no great surprise that when you get verse 17, the disciples are confused as to what Jesus is saying.

10. In Jesus clarification in verses 18-23, he locates where our problems lie. Where is it?

This is the longest conflict speech we see in the Gospel of Mark. Not only have the Pharisees added to scripture, but in doing so they have misled people and tried to hide their selfishness behind '*acts of sacrifice*'. Jesus makes clear here that nothing we do can make us right. In fact, what he's going to go on to show us is that he's going to deal with the heart problem that no amount of tradition, discipline or self-control can deal with.

11. What do you find hard in acknowledging, or sharing with others, the truth of what Jesus says here: that the problem is not external, but internal?

12. How do we talk to people about the internal problem that Jesus diagnoses here?

13. What should people expect to happen in their lives after they come to Jesus, the person who deals with heart problems?

Study 3

Mark 8:1-26 - Open your Eyes

Up to this point in Mark, Jesus hasn't yet explained how he's going to usher in the Kingdom of God that he's been preaching, or what it's going to look like. He's been doing plenty of amazing things in Israel, but there are still some question marks over what exactly his ministry and announcement entails. From 8:27 (just after this passage) Jesus is going to start being a little bit more explicit about what his ministry is going to look like. But what we see in this section is that it's bigger than anyone in Israel could grasp.

1. **If you were to ask the average Australian what Jesus purpose was and why he came, what would they say? Why is there such divergent views when he himself was so clear?**

Read Mark 8:1-26

We've already seen Jesus feeding lots of people back in 6:30-44, so the miracle he does here should be no surprise. What's surprising is who he does it for. We've just seen prior to this passage Jesus leave Israel and head into Gentile country (7:24) and have a confronting discussion with someone as far from being Jewish as possible (7:26), and then heal a deaf and mute Gentile.

2. **Compare the feeding in 6:30-44 and the feeding recorded here. What are the similarities and what are the differences?**
3. **What are the details that Mark records in this account? What's the significance of them?**
4. **Does this account (& the two stories previous to this one) tell us anything new about the Kingdom of God that Jesus is announcing?**

With all that Jesus had done, the Pharisees are still looking for something more.

5. **What is it they ask for? Why is it a stupid request? (cf. Mark 1:11)**
6. **But the disciples in 8:14-21 are having problems understanding as well. What are they confused about and why? It's easy to think the disciples are stupid, but where do you think their confusion comes from? Is it reasonable?**

7. **What's the difference between not being able to see and not wanting to see?**
8. **Do you think this is still the case today? What does it look like? (Try to be nuance in understanding the problem here instead of black & white).**
9. **As an aside (i.e. the passage isn't directly speaking to this...I just think it's a good question), are there areas in your life where you know the answer, but purposefully turn a blind eye? Are there areas in your life where you may just not know that what you're doing is wrong? How do you deal with both of those situations?**

At the end of this series of stories, Jesus gives a tangible demonstration of what's going on with people.

10. **What's the example in 8:22-26? What's Jesus trying to demonstrate through what he does?**
11. **What's the hope that this demonstration gives? Where does the source of that hope / revelation lie?**

In the very next verses, Jesus' true identity is going to be articulated for the first time. It's a bit point in the Gospel. But while Peter gets his identity right, he isn't willing to accept Jesus' explanation of what he's come to do. We'll get to that next week, but to finish off this study, discuss these things:

12. **For us to truly understand Jesus and what he's calling us to, what needs to happen? (Consider the actions and symbolism in the last healing in this passage)**
13. **Following from this, what's our responsibility for ourselves? What's our responsibility for those around us?**

14. What does this passage say about our friends / family that don't understand Jesus' purpose and mission?

Share stories of where this has been hard or encouraging and then pray for them that they might have their eyes open and come to know him.