



# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

## STUDY GUIDE

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2020

WEEKS 21-27

## Mark 7:31-37

<sup>31</sup>Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup>And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. <sup>33</sup>And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. <sup>34</sup>And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." <sup>35</sup>And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup>And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup>And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

## Notes

## Discussion Questions:

**1) Study:** What is the literary context of these verses? What has come before in the healing of the Syrophenician woman? Do you remember the focus of Anthony's November preaching on those verses? How are those verses most obviously connected to these ones?

**2) Reflect:** In the past few weeks, in what area of your life have you most been in need of the touch of the hand of Jesus? How have you been most in need of his power, mercy, and healing?

**3) Confess:** Have you, by disobedience, become in part like the deaf man here, demonstrating a deafness to God? Confess, and rest assured in the power of his healing touch.

**4) Discuss:** What do we do when it seems that God chooses not to heal in the miraculous manner demonstrated here? In this regard, during your time at First Baptist, how have you learned to speak of a theology of suffering? Consider reading in the next weeks Kelly Kopic's *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*.

**5) Discern:** How are you practicing congregational care amidst our church family in a way that you are bringing to Christ—either prayerfully or physically—those in need of healing? How are you genuinely getting to know those in our congregation so as to know true needs?

**6) Encourage:** What kind of emotions might have been flooding through the deaf man upon being healed? When have you felt these kind of emotions in your own Christian experience? Encourage one another with your testimonies.

## Mark 8:1-21

During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, <sup>2</sup> "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." <sup>4</sup> His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?" <sup>5</sup> "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied. <sup>6</sup> He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. <sup>7</sup> They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. <sup>8</sup> The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>9</sup> About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, <sup>10</sup> he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup> He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it." <sup>13</sup> Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

<sup>14</sup> The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." <sup>16</sup> They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread." <sup>17</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?

<sup>18</sup> Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? <sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. <sup>20</sup> "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." <sup>21</sup> He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

## Discussion Questions:

**1) Study:** Reread the feeding of the 5,000 from Mark 6, which we studied in November. Compare and contrast that pericope (passage) with this one. Why do you think it was critical to Mark to include this feeding in his gospel?

**2) Discern:** What is one particular way that you can move along with the Spirit's prompting to demonstrate the compassion of Christ before the hunger of Vancouver—whether physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual?

**3) Pray:** Ask God for the miracle that those “who are far from him” (verse 3) would come close to him, to feed on his sustenance by the miracle of his multiplication.

**4) Meditate:** If the “yeast of Herod” is understood based on Mark 6's macabre banquet, then we could describe this yeast as an insatiable desire for authority and relevance. Meditate: in what ways is your heart currently being seduced by the yeast of being in power, being in control, being relevant, being liked?

**5) Confess:** How have you recently been guilty of the obtuseness of the disciples that is on display here, forgetting the way that God has abundantly provided in the past, focused rather on the abundance of one's problems? Confess your own dullness, and ask for his grace to illuminate your hearts again.

**6) Reflect:** How are you encouraged in your own circumstances by the fact that even though Jesus is dismayed by the dullness of the disciples, he does not desert them?

## Mark 8:22-26

<sup>22</sup> They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

<sup>24</sup> He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

<sup>25</sup> Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."



Jesus Healing the Blind Man  
(stained glass)

## Notes

## Discussion Questions

**1) Study:** What is the literary context of this passage? Why might it make sense for these verses to follow what we examined last week in the feeding of the 4,000?

**2) Study:** What happened in Mark's gospel the last time that Mark located Jesus and the disciples in Bethsaida? Does that pericope (passage) resonate thematically in this one? Keep in mind that the name "Bethsaida" ( צִידָה בֵּת ) in Hebrew/Aramaic means "the house of provision/food," or also potentially "the house of fishing." בֵּית צִידָה

**3) Encourage:** How has Jesus already restored your sight, working in your life along the pathway that is Christian discipleship? Encourage one another in this regard.

**4) Meditate:** How are you currently in need of Christ's restoring touch so that you might "see everything clearly" ?

**5) Meditate:** How does the progressive nature of this healing—of sight restored in steps—encourage you along the progressive path of discipleship? In other words, how are you encouraged by the truth that even if we are not yet "seeing" completely clearly, Christ's healing touch longs to wholly restore us?

**6) Pray:** Note that the word for "clearly," describing the man's restored vision in verse 25, is τηλαυγῶς (telaugos), a compound word literally meaning "from afar + dawn," as in "beaming from afar." Pray that the illumination of Christ in your life would shine on all parts of your life, especially those aspects of your life that might currently be far from Christ.

## Mark 8:27-38

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" <sup>28</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." <sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. <sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." <sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

## Notes



## Discussion Questions:

**1) Study:** Review last week's passage of the restoration of the blind man's sight. How does the theme of sight echo down through this week's passage of Christ's identity? How might Peter's presence in this passage be seen in the figure of the blind man?

**2) Study:** What is the cultural and geographical context of Peter's confession occurring at the city of Caesarea Philippi? What do you know about Caesarea Philippi? Consider consulting the article on the city at [landofthebible.com](http://landofthebible.com)

**3) Meditate:** In the deepest regions of your heart, is the answer to Christ's question "Who do people say that I am?" the same as your answer to Christ's question "Who do you say that I am? In other words, does the Christology that you've been taught—the instruction about Christ, his nature, and his identity—match up with the Christology lived your life? If you sense points of inconsistency, where are those points?

**4) Meditate:** In what areas of your life is it easy to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, as our Anointed Lord (*Christos* is the Greek of the Hebrew *Masach*, meaning "Anointed One.")? In what areas of your life do you find it difficult to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah?

**5) Confess:** How do you identify with the Peter of these verses: one moment, eagerly confessing Jesus as Messiah, as the Anointed One; the next moment, unwittingly revealing your own ignorance to God's plan and purposes? Confess the lack of consistency in your walk of discipleship.

**6) Discuss:** What are some of the ways that 21st century Vancouver culture teaches us "to save our lives"? Consider this question from the perspectives of different age groups: those 20-30; those 40-60; those 60 and older. What are the temptations that we face in trying to live a life of cross-bearing discipleship, premised upon denying ourselves?

## Mark 9:1-13

<sup>9</sup> And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power." <sup>2</sup> And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." <sup>8</sup> And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. <sup>9</sup> And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. <sup>11</sup> And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" <sup>12</sup> And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup> But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

## Notes

## Discussion Questions:

**1) Study:** Read the passage of Moses' ascent up Mount Sinai from Exodus 24? What are some similarities among the two narratives? How does that iconic Old Testament passage resonate here in Mark's transfiguration?

**2) Study:** The only other three times that the verb μεταμορφῶ (*metamorphoo*), "transfigure," appears in the New Testament includes: the parallel transfiguration account in Matthew 7, and the epistle examples in Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. Look up the Romans and 2 Corinthians references. Do those verses help inform our Markan passage? Or vice versa: does the Markan passage help inform the epistle passages?

**3) Discern:** Unique though it may be, how does the transfiguration of Christ, especially recounted in its literary context of the cross-bearing path of discipleship, encourage you this week? Ask the Spirit how the suffering that is part of discipleship might be for glory and transformation in your own life.

**4) Reflect:** How are you currently engaging the practice of actively listening to God?

**5) Encourage:** Look back on your own past, considering the points at which God has comforted you in the past in the midst of suffering. Be reassured that the Son of Man who suffers with us is also the Son of God who shines in glory. Encourage one another with your testimonies of God who suffers with us.

**6) Discern:** To whom of the ones suffering in your community might you be, by the powerful ministry of the Spirit, the presence of God—to overshadow and reassure?

## Mark 9:14-29

<sup>14</sup> And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. <sup>16</sup> And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" <sup>17</sup> And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. <sup>18</sup> And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." <sup>19</sup> And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." <sup>20</sup> And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. <sup>21</sup> And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. <sup>22</sup> And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." <sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" <sup>25</sup> And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." <sup>26</sup> And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. <sup>28</sup> And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" <sup>29</sup> And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

## Discussion Questions:

**1) Pray:** Pray that the city of Vancouver—especially those in our own neighbourhoods—would experience what it is to be greatly amazed by Jesus, and to learn the joy that it is to come running to him.

**2) Reflect:** Jesus has just come down from the mountain with Peter, James, and John—after the transfiguration experience—only to be bitterly disappointed by them. In this sense, consider: when has your own Christian experience been marked by the uncomfortable juxtaposition of glorious triumph and disappointing “reality check”?

**3) Meditate:** In what way do you identify with the father of the demon-possessed, mute child, crying out, “Have compassion on us and help us?” How are you in need of the compassion and help of Christ this week?

**4) Discern:** How can you be working with the presence of Christ to raise up those in need to stand (verse 27), in the context of the challenges of modern life in Vancouver?

**5) Discuss:** What does this passage have to say about the place of doubt in the Christian pilgrimage of life?

**6) Listen:** Have you ever heard Audrey Assad’s song “I believe, Help my Unbelief”? Listen to the song now (YouTube), meditating quietly upon the lyrics.

**6) Reflect:** How are you encouraged in your own circumstances by the fact that even though Jesus is dismayed by the dullness of the disciples, he does not desert them?

## Mark 9:30-37; 10:13-16

9:<sup>30</sup> They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know,<sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."<sup>32</sup> But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.<sup>33</sup> And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"<sup>34</sup> But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.<sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."<sup>36</sup> And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them,<sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

10:<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them.<sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."<sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

## Notes

## Discussion Questions:

**1) Confess:** In the last few weeks, how have you too quickly forgotten that the Christian walk is one of death before resurrection? Ask for God's forgiveness for your lack of perspective, and rest assured in his resurrection power.

**2) Discuss:** What are some of the many ways that contemporary Vancouver culture points us, whether explicitly or implicitly, to desire to be the greatest? In walking the Christian pathway of Christ's suffering and passion, why is it so difficult to fight against these societal tendencies?

**3) Reflect:** How do we, as the family of FBC, do well in our church life to hear and respond to the gospel truth that the last will be first? How do we fail to live out this paradoxical truth? Ask for the Spirit's illumination over these questions.

**4) Discern:** Who are "the children" in your neighbourhood? Who are those, both young and old, whom we can welcome with the welcome of God into our church and Connection Group life?

**5) Study:** There are so many pages of Christian history that we could read to understand the blessings that God pours into our lives as Christians seek to be servants of all. To start, consider reading *Living Gently in a Violent World: The Prophetic Witness of Weakness*, by theologian Stanley Hauerwas and Catholic founder of L'Arche Jean Vanier.

**6) Discuss:** How do we do well to incorporate the life of our children into the life of our church at FBC? What are some ways that we might grow in this regard? Are there ways in which we can bring children more fully into the congregation as a whole?

## Mark 9:38-50

<sup>38</sup> John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." <sup>39</sup> But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. <sup>40</sup> For the one who is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup> For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

<sup>42</sup> "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup> And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' <sup>49</sup> For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup> Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

## Notes



## Discussion Questions:

**1) Meditate:** How might the Spirit be showing you, in the past and in upcoming weeks and months, that the boundaries of participation in God's mission and kingdom are more expansive than we might expect?

**2) Reflect:** When was the last time that you fellowshiped in some way with Christians who do not consider FBC their "church home"? How have you sought fellowship with the Church, capital "C" in Vancouver? If this matter has not been on your mind, consider: Why not?

**3) Discern:** Who are those organizations in your area of Vancouver that are seeking the good of our city? In what ways might your Connection Group consider befriending and cooperating with those groups? Ask for the Spirit's enlightenment in this regard.

**4) Study:** When was the last time that you thought carefully about a Christian ecclesiology—a theology of the church? If it's been too long, consider spending time with Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*.

**5) Discuss:** The material in verses 42-50 clearly links with what we read last week around the topic of "little ones." Yet, what is the connection between the first paragraph of this week's passage, verses 38-41, and verses 42-50? Do you sense any thematic overlap?

**6) Discern:** How are saltiness and peace related? At FBC, how can the peace within our church, the peace of our Triune God, be an element of our saltiness as disciples? Are there ways that we can organically and humbly demonstrate our peace-making before a watching world starved of a "salty diet"?

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ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ 8:29

Ἐμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;  
ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος λέγει αὐτῷ·  
Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς.

“But who do you say that I am?”  
Peter answered him,  
“You are the Christ.”



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