



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Study Guide Light
October-November 2019
Weeks 14-20

We continue in our extended examination of the Gospel of Mark, focusing particularly on two key questions:

- a) Who is Jesus? and
- b) What does it mean to be his disciple?

Towards the goal of cultivating congregational reflection on these questions, we have for you here a Study Guide Light: a slimmer version of our weekly Study Guides that follow the sermon series. The purpose in writing this slimmer version is to make the content easily digested, especially for the ESL individuals in our family.

Along the pathway of discipleship, the pastoral team strongly encourages you to live weeklong in the sermon passages by utilizing these questions in discussion, reflection, and prayer with at least one or two others: if you are in a Connection Group, then you need look no further; if not, consider discussing these questions with a family, a friend, or an accountability partner—or consider joining a Connection Group!

For those who have come to love the Study Guides in their longer format of questions and verse-by-verse commentary notes, remember that we will still be providing that material on a weekly basis.

— Stuart Campbell



6 *He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief.*

Mark 6:1-6a

Notes:



Church of All Saints
St. Thomas
Swansea, Wales
*Christ Teaching in the
Synagogue at Nazareth*
(stainedglass.llgc.org.uk)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Reflect:* When have you found a trip home to be difficult in terms of expectations, misunderstandings, and stereotypes all created around family and life path or profession?
- 2) *Study:* While noting the disbelief of Jesus' townsfolk, Mark does not explicitly explain the reasons for the cold reception of Jesus. Nevertheless, the gospel author has provided some background, portraying conflict that has arisen throughout the gospel. For instance, review the last time Mark recorded Jesus at Nazareth, rereading Mark 3:30-34.
- 3) *Study:* What does Mark likely suppose his readers to expect with reference to Jesus teaching on the Sabbath? What did we see with Mark's last reference to the Sabbath? Review Mark 3:1-6. What was the tone of that passage?
- 4) *Meditate:* As a disciple of Jesus, to what difficult places and situations in life might you be led by Jesus—places that have various unfair and uninformed expectations of you?
- 5) *Confess:* In what ways has your heart recently looked like those of the townsfolks, lacking faith, particularly in terms of resisting the ways in which the kingdom of God is being made manifest on earth? Confess to one another, and receive afresh his forgiveness.
- 6) *Reflect:* How are you encouraged by the truth that even the lack of faith of Nazareth cannot fully inhibit the growth of the kingdom of God? How are you in need this week of the extra, unmerited mercy of God?

Mark 6:6b-13

Notes:

And he went about among the villages teaching. 7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Discussion Questions:

1) *Discern*: There is some disagreement among translators and commentators as to whether verse 6b, “And he went about among the villages teaching” is better located with verses 1-6, or verses 7-13. If we take the verse with this week’s passage, the question naturally arises: in what ways is Jesus sending you out to your “villages” to teach? Noting that κώμη (*kome*) the Greek word for village usually refers to a relatively small community, as in a small town or village, ask yourself: a) Who are those small groups of people who are naturally in your life to whom God is sending you as his missional presence? b) How are you “teaching” them, in word and deed?

2) *Discern*: Just as Jesus had first called the disciples two by two in Mark 1, so does he send them out two by two here in Mark 6. Discern at a practical level: How can we walk together in teaching the truths about the kingdom of God? For the purposes of support, protection, and witness, what might it look like team-up, “sharing” those neighbours, coworkers, acquaintances whom we long to encounter Christ?

3) *Confess*: In what ways does your heart hear this week’s passage and respond fearfully, doubting the wisdom of depending totally upon God? Search your heart, and if comfortable, confess to one another, receiving afresh his forgiveness.

4) *Meditate*: Evident in the command to take nothing is a call way from self-sufficiency and a call towards community. The image one is here of needs being met as God provides through relationships. In recent weeks, would you describe yourself as leaning towards meeting your needs through self-sufficiency, or through God’s community?

5) *Discuss*: What are the challenges that FBC faces in terms of being missional—in terms of living as ones sent out from the church into the community? Do we have practices that encourage us, literally or figuratively, to “enter into a house” to teach and reveal the kingdom of God, or do we largely remain in our church building/church activities? Why is this?

6) *Discern*: Casting out demons and healing the sick implies knowing the needs of the community. What are the needs of your corner of Vancouver? Do you know them?

14 *King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."*

Mark 6:14-29

Notes:

17 *For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.*

21 *But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Discuss:* Herod certainly provides a study by contrast. Considering this passage as a whole, how do we see the identity and character of Herod contrasting with that of Jesus? How is Mark providing a study of leadership and authority?
- 2) *Discuss:* Knowing what you know about Jesus' passion (about the final week of Jesus' life), how do the events reported here around the death of John the Baptist foreshadow the those of the death of our Lord?
- 3) *Confess:* What are the vices that lead Herod and Herodias down the destructive path that leads to murdering John the Baptist? Now turn the passage inward on yourself: have you been guilty of similar sins? Share if you feel comfortable, confessing and receiving afresh his forgiveness.
- 4) *Discuss:* Why do you suppose that Mark placed this account of the death of John the Baptist sandwiched between the sending of the Twelve (6:7-13) and their subsequent return (6:30)? At what might Mark be hinting?
- 5) *Reflect:* This story is a clear example of the importance of keeping the right company. Without absolving Herod of any of the blame of the story, one wonders: Had Herod not been surrounded by the likes of Herodias and her daughter, would the story have had a different end? In this respect, what are those discipling relationships encouraging you to grow in "righteousness and holiness"? If you lack such good company in your life, what is the Spirit calling you to do to remedy the situation?
- 6) *Pray:* In an oversimplified sense, this narrative, through the eyes of John the Baptist, is one of "bad things happening to good people." Pray that we, as the family of FBC, would be sufficiently humble, grace-filled, and courageous so as to minister to those who feel like they have been put in this category.

Mark 6:30-44

Notes:

30 *The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.*

Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Meditate*: How are you in need of rest with Jesus this week? Sit quietly with this question for a couple of minutes, and then share with one another.
- 2) *Study*: Mark seems to be portraying Jesus as a new Joshua, especially as the names of the two men are identical in Greek—Ἰησοῦς (*Iesous*). Read Numbers 27:12-23. Knowing what you know already about the life of Joshua, how do these verses inform what we see of Jesus in our Mark 6 passage?
- 3) *Pray*: Pray through Psalm 23 in deep, meditative fashion. Have one individual read one verse, and then pray out of and over that verse in line with your own personal needs. Then reread the verse. Now move onto the next verse, and repeat the liturgy.
- 4) *Discern*: The compassion of Christ becomes manifest in the teaching and feeding that meets the needs of the crowd. In what ways in the next weeks can your Connection Group be demonstrating the compassion of Christ by meeting the needs of your neighbourhood in ways that reveal Christ's love? In particular, consider, what are your "five loaves and two fish"—your resources and talents that may be multiplied by the Lord to bless others? Ask the Spirit for direction in this regards.
- 5) *Encourage*: In what ways in the past have you seen the resources of God abundantly meet your needs, particularly when the needs seemed especially great? Encourage one another with your testimonies.
- 6) *Confess*: 200 denarii represented about 8 months of an average worker's salary in the time of Christ. As it would have been impossible for the disciples to carry around that much money, their response "Shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread" carries probable sarcastic overtones. Confess: When have you believed the size of your need to far outweigh the power of Christ? Search your heart, confessing and receiving afresh his forgiveness.

Mark 6:45-56

Notes:

45 *Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. 47 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.*

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. 54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him 55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Reflect:* Do you have a regular rhythm of finding space and quiet to pray? If not, what are the prayer rhythms of some of the other individuals in your Connection Group? Might incorporating some of those practices be helpful for you?
- 2) *Encourage:* When have you felt the presence of Christ by the Spirit come near to you in times of trouble and struggle in your past? Encourage one another with your testimonies.
- 3) *Study:* By now in our Mark study, when you read this passage you are hopefully prompted to think: "This imagery of Jesus walking water must fulfill some Old Testament imagery!" Indeed this is the case! Read Job 9:1-11. How does that passage inform this one?
- 4) *Meditate:* What is a struggle that you are currently experiencing where fear would be the most natural response to the apparent challenges? In this difficult situation, how is the Spirit speaking to you, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."?
- 5) *Confess:* In what ways this week has your heart been hardened in the sense of not comprehending the power of God at work in your life and in the world? If comfortable, confess to one another, and receive afresh his forgiveness.
- 6) *Discern:* To whom is God leading you in terms of revealing the gospel truth that the touch of Jesus longs to heal? Ask the Spirit to open doors of opportunities to demonstrate this truth, both among our congregation in the manner of congregational care, and also among your neighbours and friends who do not know Jesus.

7 **N**ow when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" 6 And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

*"This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
7 in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."*
8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)— 12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him. 17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Discussion Questions:

1) *Study*: Read the Old Testament quotation from Isaiah 29:13-16. How would you describe the worship portrayed both in the Isaiah verses and in our Mark verses?

2) *Discuss*: What is the literary context of this Mark 7 passage? What are the surrounding narratives, and how do they deal with similar themes, particular as regards understandings of Gentile people and land?

3) *Confess*: Has your heart, as of late, been far from God, even if you attend FBC services regularly? In this way have you been guilty of merely “honouring God with your lips”? If so, confess this silently to the Lord, and ask for his loving Spirit to draw your heart close to him once again.

4) *Reflect*: How might we at FBC have maintained “the traditions of men” — familiar social customs of the church— while actually making it difficult to fulfill the basic commandments of loving God and neighbour?

5) *Confess*: In what ways has the church in Canada been guilty of the hypocrisy of a kind of ritual-first, traditions-first worship, one that all too easily overlooks demonstrating practical love to the city? Sit silently over this question, and ask for forgiveness for the church corporate.

6) *Pray*: Pray for those areas of your heart that are in need of the ongoing touch of the Spirit, who leads us along the ongoing path of true wholeness in Christ.

Mark 7:24-37

Notes:

24 *And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.*

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

Discussion Questions:

1) *Discuss*: Why does it make sense that these verses about the ancient division between Israel and the Gentiles are placed here in Mark's gospel? What did we just read in the preceding verses?

2) *Discern*: How is the wisdom and will of Jesus, that crosses traditional Jewish boundaries of impurity and exclusivity, propelling *you* to cross boundaries in revealing the kingdom of God? What are some of the boundaries, literal or metaphorical, that exist in your neighbourhood?

3) *Reflect*: The Syrophenician mother demonstrates tremendous humility and insight, recognizing that, through Israel, the Gentiles will receive the blessings of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God. Yet note that in the following chapter, Jesus gives much more than crumbs to a largely Gentile audience in the feeding of the 4,000. In this sense, reflect on your past: When have you been satisfied with only crumbs, rather than full loaves, in the provision of Jesus? How can you grow by the Spirit in humbly daring to ask Jesus for "full loaves"?

4) *Pray*: Pray that you would have the humble boldness of the woman in your prayers: the confidence to wrestle, even to argue, with God in prayer, asking for the blessing of the kingdom of God revealed on earth.

5) *Study*: Last week we looked at Isaiah 29; turn there again to read verses 13 to 24. How do these verses inform our passage from Mark 7, in terms of tone and expectations?

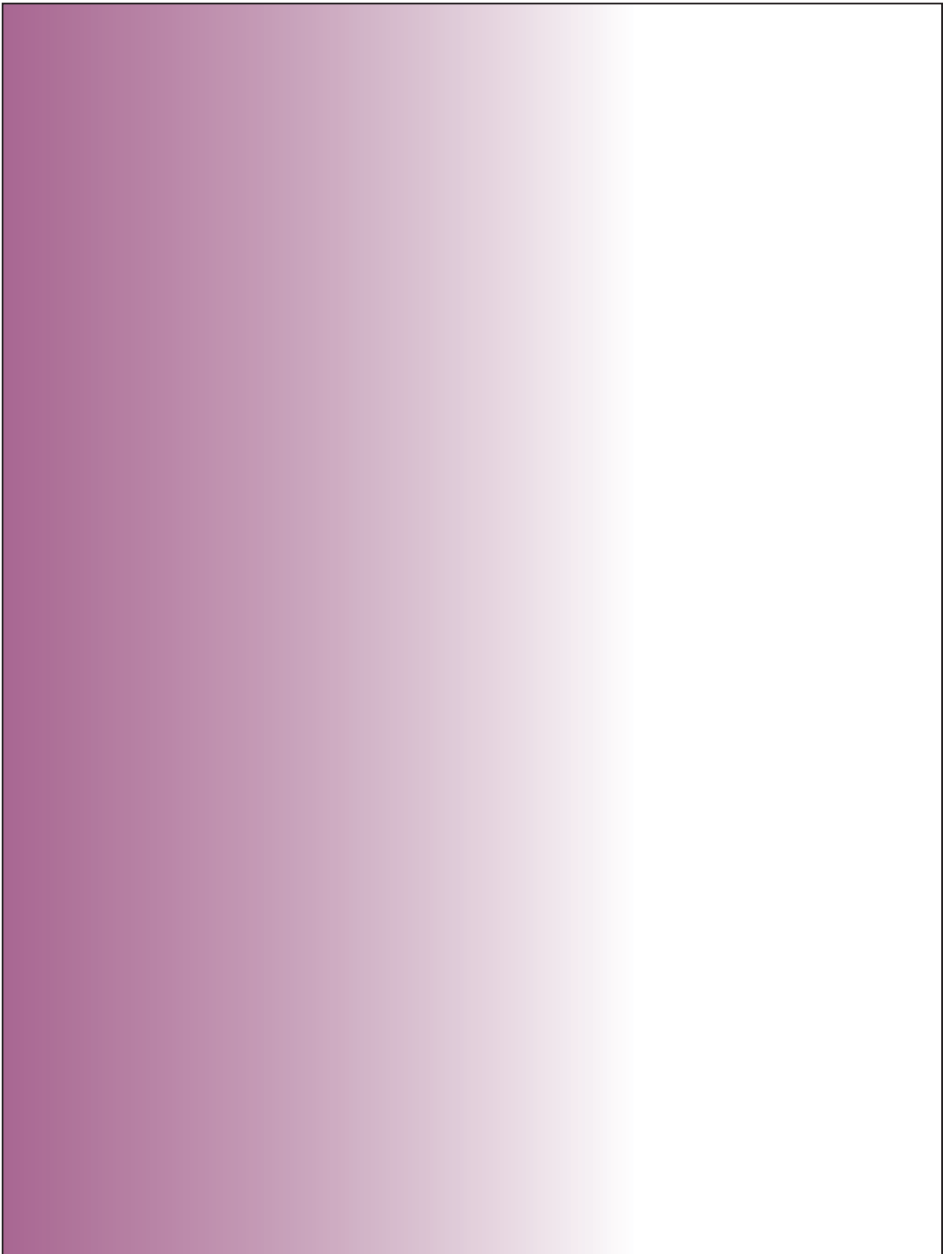
6) *Discuss*: What do we do when it seems that God does not choose to heal in the miraculous manner demonstrated here in these two accounts? During your time at First Baptist, how have you learned to speak of a theology of suffering? Consider reading, in the next weeks, Kelly Kopic's *Embodied Hope: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

7) *Confess*: How 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.



Notes





ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ 7:37

Καλῶς πάντα πεποίηκεν,

καὶ τοὺς κωφοὺς ποιεῖ ἀκούειν

καὶ τοὺς ἀλάλους λαλεῖν.

He has done all things well.

He even makes the deaf hear

and the mute speak.



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More to Come...