ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM

A Study of the Gospel of Mark
# Table of Contents

2.....................................................................................................................Introduction

4..................................................................................................How To Use This Book

6.........................................................................................................................Week One: Missing the Point

18......................................................................................................................Week Two: Giving Up

30...................................................................................................................Week Three: Prophet, Priest and King

42.....................................................................................................................Week Four: Authority

54......................................................................................................................Lenten Disciplines

56......................................................................................................................Week Five: Hearing and Obeying

68..................................................................................................................Week Six: The End

80...................................................................................................................Week Seven: The Scandal of Celebration

92.....................................................................................................................Week Eight: Eat and Run

104...........................................................................................................Week Nine: On Trial

116.............................................................................................................Week Ten: The Death of God

128..............................................................................................................Week Eleven: New Life

140...........................................................................................................Acknowledgments
John Mark, the early church leader and close companion of the apostle Peter, has already guided us through eight and a half fast-paced chapters of Jesus’ ministry. Mark began with a stunning mission statement from the lips of Jesus Himself: “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) From there, we were led on an action packed adventure complete with miraculous healings, tense confrontations, angry retorts, natural wonders, and penetrating teachings. Jesus’ activity seemed to reach a fever pitch before the clear declaration was made from Peter’s lips: “You are the Christ.” (Mark 8:29) It’s at that very moment when everything changes.

Bill Lane states it this way:

“The recognition that Jesus is the Messiah is thus the point of intersection toward which all of the theological currents of the first half of the Gospel converge and from which the dynamic of the second half of the gospel derives. In no other way could Mark more sharply indicate the historical and theological significance of the conversation in the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi.”

Literally, from that moment on in Mark’s gospel, everything changes. The conversation is more direct and urgent. The subject matter is heavier. But maybe most significantly, the frantic pacing which has been such a hallmark of Mark’s gospel dramatically slows. In fact, a large majority of the second half of this Gospel simply narrates the final week of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the trial, and the crucifixion. It’s as though Mark has, through Peter’s voice, made his point. Now he’s very slowly and intentionally showing us what that means. The first half of this great book unveiled to us the Kingdom of God; now, we will see what it takes to truly establish that Kingdom here on earth.

As with the first volume of this study (“Unveiling the Kingdom,” York Alliance Church, Fall 2012), the studies that follow will focus specifically on Mark’s re-

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telling of the story. While there will be one study each week that focuses on reading the parallel passages within the other three gospels, the rest of the studies will focus largely on Mark’s account. However, many studies will reference you to sections of Scripture throughout the Bible. If you’re new to studying the Bible, that may seem odd to you; unlike other books, the Bible is really a collection of books that not only relate to each but which also can be helpful in interpreting the related passages. For instance, important insights about the teachings of Jesus can often be found in the Old Testament, so we will often refer back to those passages.

Please be aware that studying the Bible can be a challenging endeavor. Of course, there are very few worthwhile things in life that don’t require some effort on our part. But beyond the difficulty of study in general is the fact that we have a very real enemy who is actively opposed to our understanding of the Word of God. Paul tells us that our battle is not “against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, again the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) Therefore, if you find yourself feeling discouraged, frustrated, or unable to understand something, I want to strongly encourage you to stop and pray. Ask God to guide your heart and thoughts, and to give you understanding. Also, don’t do this study in isolation. While most will (and should!) complete the actual studies individually, I would encourage you to get connected to someone else who is doing this study, and connect with them each week to talk about what you’re learning. Along the way, if you have frustrations or are confused about something you’re studying, they can provide encouragement and guidance as you journey through the study together. And, of course, vice-versa. If you get stuck along the way, you should feel free and encouraged to skip a section, or even an entire study, and move to the next one.

As we journey toward Easter, I pray that we will each identify with Jesus in a new way. As we look fully into His life, death, and resurrection, may we each find new life as well!

Grace and peace,
Brian Kannel
York Alliance Church
How to Use This Book

This book is designed to be used as a companion resource to the Spring 2013 sermon series at York Alliance Church. Each Sunday’s message will provide the central teaching of the Scripture passage for that week. The four studies for each week will lead you into that teaching in even greater detail. The first study will consist simply of a detailed reading of the passage itself, within the context that Mark places it, in order to seek to understand his intended meaning. The second study will be a reading of any parallel passages from the other gospels, in order to have a fuller understanding of what’s going on in the scene that Mark is depicting. The other two studies will further unpack the event itself, often using the rest of the Bible to illuminate that truth. You will receive most benefit from this study as you utilize it in conjunction with both the Sunday messages and a weekly LIFE group gathering, a small community with whom you are able to discuss and apply these truths. If you are unable to attend the Sunday gathering for any reason, the sermon audio can be found at www.yorkalliance.org/resources. However, you’ll find that the studies don’t necessarily cover the same information as what you hear on Sunday mornings—in fact, the goal is to offer additional insights into the passage that there isn’t time to fully engage on Sunday morning. Therefore, you are welcome to study during the week prior to the Sunday gathering, or in the week that follows—either will work fine.

There are a few specific notes that may be helpful as you begin your study using this guide:

• There are four studies each week, which might seem overwhelming to some. You shouldn’t feel any pressure to complete each week’s studies before you move on to the following week—move at your own pace.
• It may be helpful for some to combine the first two studies of the week, since they predominately focus on readings within the Gospels. Others may choose to focus solely on those and ignore the directed studies, or ignore the first two and move immediately into the directed studies. Either way, **utilize this guide as it best meets your needs.**
• The “Reading Parallel” study is designed to be less guided and more independent. If that study is frustrating for you, feel free to skip over it.
• This study is designed to help you learn to study the Bible for yourself, not simply to get the right answers. If you are wrestling with figuring out a specific section, do not be discouraged; rather, engage the process of study. Paul’s admonition to believers in Jesus is for each of us to continually grow in our maturity so that we can eat on our own, not just rely on the milk that comes from others. (1 Corinthians 3:2)

• There will continue to be an Application section at the end of each study. Additionally, a blank sermon note sheet (for use on Sunday mornings and/or with the sermon audio available online) as well as a “Facilitation/Application” sheet will be included. The primary intent of this page is that it be used within York Alliance Church LIFE groups, but it could certainly be used in a variety of other settings.

• Please note that there is a specific section entitled “Lenten Disciplines” on pg. 54 which will correspond with the beginning of Lent in February.

• Although the English Standard Version will be utilized within this study, feel free to use any English translation with which you are comfortable. In fact, you are encouraged to read from multiple translations, particularly with passages that you are struggling to understand fully. This will help you see each passage in a more complete light.

• Unlike some previous York Alliance study guides, there is not a specific “Family Time” section within this guide. However, families are strongly encouraged to use the first study of the week as a family devotional, reading the passages and discussing its details. You’ll be shocked at the details that children can and will pick out of the stories!

If you have questions about how to best utilize the book or have comments on what you’re finding in it and/or on your experiences with it, they are welcomed! Email me at bkannel@yorkalliance.org.

“Jesus, we are in awe of Your love for us. Not only that you would make Yourself nothing and come in the form of a baby, but that You would humble Yourself even further by dying on the cross to establish Your Kingdom and invite us into it. As we study Your life, I pray that You would arrest us with the reality of who You are, and transform us into Your image. May we love that which You love, be passionate about that which You are passionate about, and may we have the grace to lay down our lives as You have done for us. In Jesus’ Name, amen.”
As Jesus descends from the mountain and begins to move toward the cross, we see several instances where the disciples simply miss the point. Whether it's a focus on power over prayer, greatness over humility, dividing over uniting, happiness over holiness, or even life over death, Jesus shows the disciples, as well as us, how we often miss the point.
Going With the Flow

For the first study of each week, we’ll engage Scripture reading as a discipline. One of the challenges we have with reading Scripture in our modern context is that we tend to look at individual texts as isolated from their context. Therefore, as we read the second half of Mark, we’ll continually look backward to that which preceded the passage we are reading, paying close attention to context clues that reveal things like timing, location, setting, audience, etc. Within each passage, we’ll seek to note details that Mark has chosen to include, as well as seeking to understand why he included them.

Turn to Mark 8:27 – 9:50. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• What is the most significant thing that happened in the second half of Mark 8?

• Prior to the account that begins in 9:14, from where is Jesus coming? Who was with Him?

• What sticks out to you in the story of Jesus driving this spirit out of the boy?
• What contrast do you note between Jesus and the disciples in vs. 30-37?

• What specific issues does Jesus talk about in vs. 38-50?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

The four gospel accounts give us four distinct views of Jesus, often providing separate angles on the same events. One method of study is to wholly focus on a single gospel; another method is to look at a “harmony” of the gospels in order to gain a more complete understanding of events. The first study each week will focus on this first method. This second study will focus on the latter method. Note: If you find that you are unable to complete four studies each week, it is recommended that you skip the “Reading Parallel” study and simply focus your study on the Gospel of Mark.

First, re-read Mark 9:14-50. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 17:14-20, 22-23, 18:1-14

What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

- Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

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2 The NIV Harmony of the Gospels has been used to determine all parallel passages throughout this study. Robert L. Thomas, Editor, The NIV Harmony of the Gospels (HarperCollins, New York, NY, 1988.) Outline on pgs. 15-23.
Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus\(^3\), have included the details that he did?

How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

**Application:**

- What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

- What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?

\(^3\) This statement, as well as those within the questions about Matthew and John (in the weeks that parallel John) are not intended to be confusing nor are they specific to the passage. They are simply to note that each author is writing from a specific perspective and for a specific purpose, which may or may not influence their specific choices within the passages noted.
On the Mountain, Off the Mountain

What’s the deepest, most profound spiritual experience that you’ve ever had? For most of us, we can think of at least one time when we had a deep encounter with God, although the settings will be different for everyone. For some, the deepest encounters come in nature; for others, the corporate worship setting; for others, personal meditation and prayer; and so on. As Peter, James and John accompanied Jesus up the mountain, they most certainly had the most profound spiritual encounter of their lives!

Read Mark 9:1-13, and then think about your own spiritual encounters. Describe the emotions that Peter, James and John may have been experiencing as they descended the mountain with Jesus.

Now, read Mark 9:14-29. How would you imagine their emotions changed as they encountered the rest of the disciples along with this man and his son?

What reason did Jesus give for why they couldn’t drive the spirit out?

Turn to Exodus 32. Beginning in Exodus 20, Moses has ascended the mountain of God to meet with Him and receive the law. In chapter 32, he is called off the mountain to encounter the people. Read the chapter.
• What did the people do?
• By their actions, what were the people saying to God?

As Jesus and the three disciples came off the mountain, they encountered a scene that was similar in many ways to the scene in Exodus 32.
• What are some of the parallels?

• How does this passage help to explain what Jesus meant by His response as to why they couldn’t drive the spirit out? What does it mean that “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.” (Mark 9:29)?

Application:
• Our experiences on the mountaintop often prepare us for what we encounter off the mountain. How did some of the profound experiences that you’ve had with Jesus prepare you for “regular” life?

• What does this say about a regular connection to community and about times of prayer and Bible reading?
True Greatness

In his book *Good to Great in God’s Eyes*, author Chip Ingram notes the fact that when Jesus’ disciples argued about which one of them was the greatest, Jesus never rebuked them. “He gave them a completely new paradigm about what greatness is, but he didn’t condemn their desire.”⁴ What does that mean for us as Christians, seeking to pursue Jesus with whole hearts? Ingram again: “Should we aspire to be mediocre Christians? [somehow afraid that pursuing greatness will be prideful?] And is it really prideful to want to honor God with great faith and excellent work?”⁵

Read Mark 9:33-37. What did Jesus say would be the way to be the greatest?

Jesus didn’t just call the disciples to be servants, but He modeled it. Read the following passages, and write down what it means to be a “servant of all”:

- Matthew 20:26-28
- John 13:1-15
- Philippians 2:5-8

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⁴ Chip Ingram, *Good to Great in God’s Eyes*, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), pg. 7.
⁵ Ibid. pg. 8.
Now, continue to read in Philippians 2:

- Read vs. 9-11. What is the eternal result of Jesus’ serving?

Who does the “exalting” in vs. 9?

- Read vs. 12-16. What is the earthly result of modeling our serving after Jesus?

The path to true greatness in the Kingdom of God is through serving others. Like children, we are called to do so eagerly—and with joy!

**Application:**

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your “serving” right now? What’s a practical thing that you can do to make that number one better?

- Are there areas that you have a hard time serving? What does Jesus’ model in John 13 say about that to you? How will you respond?
LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “Are you making a new year’s resolution? If so, what is it?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 9:14-50

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- What’s an area where you tend to rely on your own strength rather than God’s strength?
- Is there a time where a spiritual “high” has prepared you for a difficult test? Describe that time and what you learned from it.
- What are some ways that you choose happiness over holiness?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your “serving” right now? What’s a practical thing that you can do to make that number one better than it currently is?
- What are some ways that we can help each other not miss the point? Can this happen if we’re only connected once a week? Why or why not?

Works: As we move into a new year, we naturally evaluate our lives and make decisions about the ways that we spend time, energy, money, etc. However, that time is often an inward, individualistic one. Take time to think and pray in two directions: (1) Outward—How is your life connected to the world that Jesus loves and died for? What are some practical ways that you can make this connection more Kingdom-oriented? (2) Communal—What is your level of connection to this group? Are we working together to impact the world around us, or are we just a group of individuals who meet together? (Be honest!) What are some ways that we can work together for Kingdom impact in the coming year?

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
Missing the Point
Mark 9:14-50

Sermon Notes:
Week Two: Giving Up
Mark 10:1-52

It's easy to make a pursuit of Christ about following the rules. However, the questions that Jesus is posing are not so much about what we're willing to do, but about what we're willing to give up. We're often captured by an unseen idolatry, a holding on to our rights, our wealth, our control, or our comfort as ultimate. Jesus insists that if we are to follow Him, He alone must be ultimate.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 9:50 - 10:52. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• What is the context of the end of chapter 9 that Mark uses to lead into the series of stories in chapter 10? Why might that be important?

• Divide chapter 10 up into smaller pieces. What are the smaller sections that you found?

• Go back to your list above—what are the people that Jesus encounters in each of these sections holding onto? Write your answers within your list above. (Depending on how you divided the chapter, you might not have answers for every section.)
• Which of these statements by Jesus in Mark 10 is most surprising to you? Why?

• Which statement do you think may have been most surprising to the disciples when they originally heard Jesus make it? Why?

**Application:**
- What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 10:1-52. Then, read the following passages:

• Matthew 19:1-30, 20:17-34
• Luke 18:15-43

• What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

• Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?
• Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
Divorce

With divorce rates skyrocketing both inside and outside of the church, there is much confusion and concern over what Jesus teaches on divorce. Before we look at what He meant, it’s important to look more fully at what He actually said.

Read Mark 10:1-12, and then read Matthew 19:1-12.

Scholars note that “the issue of divorce was a consistent topic of debate in the rabbinic community.” Schmanski. The core of the debate revolved around a few Old Testament verses but, most specifically, around Deuteronomy 24:1. Read that verse and summarize it below in your own words:

Michael Card summarizes the debate this way:

The central issue for the rabbis was the meaning of “something improper” or “shameful.” (Translated “some indecency” in the ESV) There were two major schools of thought. The followers of Shamai, the stricter of the two schools, held that “shameful” referred only to adultery. Their conclusion? The only justifiable cause for divorce was marital unfaithfulness. The followers of Hillel, on the other hand, determined that “shameful” meant anything that annoyed or displeased the husband… Usually when there was a disagreement among the [two] schools, often in regard to the Sabbath, Jesus sided with Hillel. This is the only example where He agrees with Shamai.

As you look at this debate and the statements of Jesus in both Mark 10 and specifically in Matthew 19, what statement was Jesus making?

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7 Ibid.
There are some scholars\(^8\) who cite Exodus 21:10-11 as giving three additional requirements for biblical marriage (in addition to marital faithfulness) and, thereby, three additional biblical reasons for divorce. They maintain that Jesus was commenting on a theological discussion of His day, not seeking to make a blanket statement on divorce. Other scholars\(^9\) strongly disagree with that line of reasoning. However, more important than that specific debate is the clear weight that Jesus puts on marriage and divorce.

- What does Jesus give as the reason for the Deuteronomy 24 command in Mark 10?

- Jesus answers with a quote from Genesis 2. What is His verdict on this in vs. 9?

With the difficulty of that statement, it’s important to hear Card a final time:

I believe the operative words in Mark 10:9 are ‘what God has joined together.’ Because of the hardness of the human heart, marriages occur that do not have as their foundation this bond created by God… But we must be cautious and preserve His original intent. If two people come together acknowledging that the Lord has bonded them and made them one, then when temptation arises to give up on that union, they must take seriously what Jesus said about the undissolvable bond God has created.\(^{10}\)

**Application:**

*In this section, please pray for those in your life who have been touched by the tragedy of divorce—both spouses and children. If you are wrestling with how to deal with your own personal experience of divorce, please feel free to email bkannel@yorkalliance.org or set up an appointment to discuss your specific situation.*

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\(^8\) David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, (IVP, Downer’s Grove, IL, 2006).


The Cost of a Savior

It’s been said that salvation is a free gift, but it will cost you everything. More to the point is Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his great book The Cost of Discipleship:

Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church disciplines, communion without confession… Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace…calls us to follow… It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.  

Mark 10 gives us two “bookend” stories that clearly show this reality. Read Mark 10:17-31 and 46-52.

• What are the similarities in the way these two men approach Jesus?

• What differences do you see in their approach?

Think about the reality of both of these men’s lives. Imagine what they owned, how they lived, what a “typical” day was for each of them. Think about the money that they had and how they “earned” it. Now, read vs. 21 and vs. 51. In what ways are these effectively saying the same thing?

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Now, contrast the two responses. Read vs. 22 and vs. 52. What did the two men do differently?

It’s easy for us to miss a detail that Mark records in vs. 50. Read it again. What did Bartimaeus leave behind to follow Jesus?

“Mark gives us the detail that Bartimaeus throws aside his cloak—probably his only possession. With it he would have caught the coins for which he begged.” While the rich man clung to all that he had, the beggar threw aside the little bit that he had in order to fully follow Jesus!

Application:
• Does your approach to Jesus more resemble the rich man or the beggar? Why?

• Are there things that you “own” (not simply material things—attitudes, passions, etc.) that you would be unwilling to sacrifice for Jesus? Confess this to Him and ask Him to work in your heart in these areas.

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What’s your favorite part about York Alliance Church?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 10:1-52

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- What “rights” do you tend to hold onto as non-negotiable in your life? What does it look like to sacrifice your rights?
- Where does your hardness of heart get in the way of the desire of God for your life or for those around you?
- Does your approach to Jesus more resemble the rich man or the beggar? Why is that?
- What do you struggle to release to Jesus? How might you have more freedom if you were able to release that thing?
- In what ways do we sacrifice for this community? Would you say that we are very willing, moderately willing, or not willing at all to sacrifice our wants and desires for one another? Why?

Works: If we’re honest about why we have so little impact on those around us who need to know Jesus, most of us would have to admit that it’s because we hold onto our preferences and comforts too tightly. Whether that’s our material possessions, our time and energy, or our reputation, our willingness to sacrifice has a direct relationship to the advancement of the Kingdom of God among us. Take time to pray specifically about one small step you could take this week in order to engage someone with the reality of the Kingdom of God. Pray specifically for that person and/or situation, and then follow up this week!

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
Sermon Notes:
The threefold offices of Jesus are the embodiment of their Old Testament types: He is the ultimate Prophet, the perfect Priest, and the King of all kings. As Jesus enters Jerusalem during what we know as Holy Week, Jesus embodies each of these ideals as a window into who He truly is, and calls us to hear Him as Prophet, trust Him as Priest, and follow Him as King.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 10:52 – 11:26. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

- Why might the last verse in chapter 10 provide a great launching point for chapter 11?

• As you look at your outline, what are some of the ideas that Mark may be trying to communicate by putting these stories in this order?

• What questions do you have as you look at the account of the fig tree? Does Jesus answer them in vs. 22-25? Why or why not? Please note: this can be a confusing passage which will be looked at in more detail during the “Fruitless Activity” study this week.

Application:
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 11:1-26. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 21:1-22
- John 12:12-19

What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

- Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

- Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?
• Why might John, who was writing more generally to all who would believe and focused heavily on the deity of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
Mode of Entry

Many of us who have grown up in church can easily remember the joyous Sundays, one week prior to Easter, when palm fronds were distributed and waved frantically around the sanctuary… and lobby… and field outside… and ultimately braided together and used as a whip to threaten my sister, which resulted in them being thrown away by mid-afternoon… But I digress.

The iconic picture of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey’s colt is one that many of us are familiar with. So familiar, in fact, that it’s difficult to see the irony of the moment. Read Mark 11:1-10.

• As Jesus rides into the city, what are the people doing?

• Mark records them shouting “Hosanna!” Using your Bible footnotes, can you determine what that word means?

Can you see the irony of these people crying out “Lord, save us!” as He rides in on a tiny donkey? What a humble king! However, there was reasoning behind the cry of the people, whether they knew it or not.

• Read Zechariah 9:9. What does it say about the entry of the Messiah?
Theologian William Lane notes that the “rabbis were embarrassed to explain how the Messiah could be content with so humble an entry.”\(^{13}\) Therefore, they devised an explanation for the passage in their teaching, rooted in Israel’s preparedness for the coming Messiah: “Behold, the Son of Man comes ‘on the clouds of heaven’ and ‘lowly and riding an ass.’ If they (Israel) are worthy, ‘with the clouds of heaven’; if they are not worthy, ‘lowly, and riding upon an ass.’”\(^{14}\)

With this in mind, read the following passages:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- Revelation 1:7
- Revelation 19:11-16

How will Jesus return, according to these prophecies?

While the initial coming of Jesus—from the manger to the donkey to the cross—was full of humility and lowliness, His second coming will be in radical power and glory! In just a little more than a chapter, Jesus will remind us to be ready.

**Application:**

- Are you excited about the return of Jesus? Why or why not? How does your understanding of that event affect your readiness?

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\(^{14}\) Ibid.
**Fruitless Activity**

As has been the case throughout his gospel, Mark uses a “bookend” technique to highlight a specific point that Jesus is making. What, at first, seems to be irrational behavior on the part of Jesus is actually deeply prophetic behavior, intended to bear the weight of a difficult message to the nation of Israel.

Read Mark 11:12-25.

- What is immediately evident about the tree? What happens to it?

On the surface, Jesus curses a tree for not bearing fruit, even though it wasn’t even the season for that fruit. At best, that seems to be a quick, irrational reaction—at worst, a fit of mean-spirited anger. However, Mark takes great pains to separate the incident involving the tree with Jesus’ so-called “cleansing” of the temple. The question is: What was He trying to communicate in the temple? Interpretations abound: Was Jesus clearing a path for the Gentiles to come into the presence of God? Was He protesting financial extortion happening through the purchasing of sacrificial animals or the money-changers? Was He simply seeking to restore the original purpose of worship and bring prayer back to the temple?

If Jesus is seeking to cleanse or reform the temple, Morna Hooker notes that, “as an act of reforming zeal it would have to be judged a failure: the money changers no doubt soon recovered their coins, and the place was restored to order.”

So what was He trying to do?

The best answer is found, as it often is, by investigating the Old Testament sources that Jesus quotes.

- Read Isaiah 56:1-8. How might you summarize Isaiah’s prophecy?

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• Now, read the second prophecy that Jesus quoted in Jeremiah 7:1-15. Underline the phrase “den of robbers” in vs. 11. Within the context of Jeremiah 7, what are the people being accused of?

The phrase “den of robbers” seems to

…have nothing to do with the trade in the temple. Instead, it denounces the false security that the sacrificial cult breeds… Jesus indirectly attacks them for allowing the temple to degenerate into a safe hiding place where people think that they find forgiveness and fellowship with God no matter how they act on the outside.¹⁶

This, of course, gives fuller meaning to the event with the fig tree. Jesus is not seeking to cleanse or reform the temple—He’s declaring it cursed and disqualified. It seems that a new system and new Priest will be needed.

**Application:**

• What “fruit” do you see in the rest of your life from the time that you spend in the Word, in Celebration gatherings, or with community?

• Read John 15:5. Where does fruit come from? What are some ways that you could be better positioned to bear fruit?

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¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 439.
Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What’s your favorite part about York Alliance Church?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative!
Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 11:1-26

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- What are some ways that you can clearly see Jesus as “King” in your life? What are some ways that you are your own king?
- Are you excited about the return of Jesus? Why or why not?
- How is grace different from false security? (Commonly spoken of as “spiritual fire insurance.”)
- What “fruit” do you see in your life from the time that you spent in the Word, in Celebration gatherings, and in this LIFE group?
- What are some ways that you could be better positioned to bear fruit? What about us as a group?

Works: Our pursuit of Jesus is intended to impact the world around us, through the transformation of our lives. Take time this week to pray specifically for at least one person in your life that needs to encounter Jesus and is close enough to you that they can see the work of Jesus in your life. Pray that the fruit that God is bearing in your life would be very apparent to them. Also, pray that you have an opportunity to talk with them very specifically about the work that Jesus is doing in your life.

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
Prophet, Priest, and King
Mark 11:1-26

Sermon Notes:
Throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus has refused to force people to follow Him. While He doesn’t shrink from His authority, He refuses to use it to remove our will. However, while we are able to choose our response to Him, Jesus warns us that we will need to live with the consequences of our choice. As the rightful Owner, Jesus gets the final say.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 11:12 – 12:12. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• Why might Mark seek to tie the authority of Jesus with the fruitlessness of Israel and the insufficiency of the sacrificial system?

• Does Jesus answer the question He is asked in the end of chapter 11? Why would you guess that is?

• Although Mark doesn’t specifically state it, who would you guess is a part of the crowd as Jesus speaks this parable, given the context of the end of Mark 11?
• Briefly outline the key aspects of the parable Jesus tells.

• At first reading, how would you interpret this parable

**Application:**
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 11:27 – 12:12. Then, read the following passages:

• Matthew 21:23-27, 33-46
• Luke 20:1-19

• What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

• Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?
• Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

**Application:**

• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
A Parable and A Song

Like many of Jesus’ parables, the story He tells at the beginning of chapter 12 turns the tables on His hearers, moving them from a position of indignation to a position of guilt. In fact, some scholars have compared this parable to the story that the prophet Nathan told King David in 2 Samuel 12:1-15, catching him in his guilt after his affair with Bathsheba.17 (If you’re not familiar with that story, I would recommend turning there and reading now! Begin in 2 Samuel 11 in order to fully grasp this story of God’s incredible grace.)

This parable has two layers. The first is the story itself, which the chief priests and teachers of the law would readily identify with as Israel’s primary landowners.
• Read through Mark 12:1-12. Write a brief outline/summary of the parable.

The second layer, which would have also been clearly understood by the chief priests and teachers of the law, was a very clear reference to the song from Isaiah 5:1-7 on which this parable is based. Turn there and read that song now.
• What’s the general idea of this song? Summarize it below.

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From the perspective of history, it’s easy to see the meaning of Jesus’ parable. However, it was likely more clear to the original hearers who were intimately familiar with the Old Testament.

- What happened to the three “servants” as they went on behalf of the owner?

Read the following verses:

- Jeremiah 7:25
- Ezekiel 38:17
- Amos 3:7
- Zechariah 1:6

How would the teachers of the law have understood the word “servant?”

Mark records very clearly that Jesus’ listeners knew that the parable had been told against them. In the context of Isaiah’s song, they knew what the parable meant: “They are about to be kicked out of their own party.”

**Application:**

- List some of the gifts that over which God has given you stewardship. Include both the material and the non-material. In what ways are you using these things for the glory of Jesus? What’s being wasted?

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**The Stone**

The vast majority of Scripture we can engage fully within our various English language translations. However, at times, there are additional layers of meaning that come from a kind of word play that would have been evident within the original language but which is lost in translation.

In the last study, by looking through a series of Old Testament verses, we found that the word “servant” has a double-meaning for Jesus’ original hearers. Now, an even more subtle double-meaning is present.

Read Mark 12:10-12.

In these verses, Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23. However, we miss a significant aspect of the language with our “English” ears. The word “stone” is *eben* and the word “son” is *ben*. They sound nearly identical.

- How does that affect your understanding of what Jesus is saying in this passage?

Card notes this double-meaning: “the rejected stone is code for the rejected son.” He also notes that this is one of the hallmarks of Peter’s input into Mark’s writing. Peter, who ironically was nicknamed “the rock” by Jesus (see Matthew 16:18), clearly understood Jesus as “the stone,” and carried this idea beyond Jesus to Himself as well as to the early church.

Read 1 Peter 2:4-8.

- Who is the first “living stone” that Peter refers to?

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19 Ibid., pg. 147.
20 Ibid.
• However, who are the “living stones… being built up as a spiritual house” that he references?

• What is the last reference to Jesus that Peter makes within this passage?

• Now, read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. What is the “offense” that makes men stumble in Christ?

• What about “Christ crucified” might be a stumbling block?

The cross shows God as seemingly “weak”, which we have a hard time accepting. Furthermore, it declares the depth of our sin, which is deeply offensive to those of us who see ourselves as basically good people. The cross says that our hearts are more evil than we can possibly believe, but that God loves us more completely than we can ever imagine.

Application:
• What does the metaphor of “living stones” mean to you in the way that you’re connected to the Body of Christ?
LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What was/is your least favorite chore around the house when you were growing up?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 11:27 – 12:12

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- What’s your biggest challenge in seeing what Jesus is doing around you and hearing from Him?
- Are there areas of your life that it seems that Jesus doesn’t speak into? Could it be that you aren’t willing to hear Him speak in those areas?
- Can you think of a time that Jesus clearly revealed something to you, but you refused to listen to Him? What happened?
- In what ways are you using the gifts (both material and non-material) for the glory of God? Are there gifts that you aren’t currently stewarding for His glory?
- Is this group a good illustration of the “living stones” that Peter refers to in 1 Peter 2:4-8? Why or why not? How could we get there?

Works: One of the clearest commands of Jesus is to reach out into the world around us with His message. Before your Works time, take a few minutes to read the following passages out loud: Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 5:13-16, Mark 8:34-38. Honestly evaluate: How connected is your life to the world that needs to know Jesus? Take time to repent of areas of disobedience, and pray over specific situations where you are intentionally connected to people who need Jesus, asking God to bear fruit in your life.

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
Authority
Mark 11:27 – 12:12

Sermon Notes:
One of the enduring traditions of the church is to participate in various types of fasts during the Lenten season. (Lent is the period of time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, not including Sundays.) Perhaps most familiar to many of us is the Catholic tradition of abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday and on each Friday during Lent. However, throughout the centuries, a variety of disciplines have been practiced, from the traditional concept of fasting from specific types of food to specific practices of prayer and generosity throughout the Lenten season.

As we study the gospel of Mark this year leading up to the Easter celebration, what if we intentionally added a specific aspect of Kingdom living to our lives? We’ve journeyed nearly eleven chapters into Mark’s gospel. As we have, we’ve been confronted with the reality of Jesus, the man who was God. In Mark 1, the invitation was issued: “Follow Me.” In the chapters that followed, we’ve seen Him systematically show us what will be involved in accepting that invitation, and watched as the early disciples left everything to attempt it. Jesus modeled living life according to Kingdom values, doing surprising things at surprising times. While the disciples were often confused, and more than once fell short, the testimony just a few short years after Jesus ascended was that “these men… have turned the world upside down.” (Acts 17:6) Kingdom living, even when practiced imperfectly, can make a dramatic impact on the world around us.

The ideal situation would be that you would determine, along with your LIFE group or at least a portion of your group, a Kingdom activity that you would be willing to commit to practicing over the course of the Lenten season. At the end of this section, I’ve listed a few examples; they are not intended to limit potential activities, but simply to provide a variety of ideas. Once you determine a Kingdom activity that you each will commit to being part of, commit to encouraging one another in this practice throughout the season. This will certainly take the form of basic accountability, but it should also have aspects of story-telling and celebration within it as well! If you are practicing this as an entire LIFE group, it would be great to touch base weekly on how
this Kingdom discipline is affecting you and the world around you. If you are doing this with another group of some kind, such as a smaller accountability group, you might find it necessary to schedule a connection time throughout the week in order to encourage one another in your journey.

Like the examples below, a good discipline will have very specific and measurable aspects to it. While generosity, for example, is certainly a Kingdom value, “being generous” would be a bad goal because the definition of generosity is different for every person. However, determining to use an additional 2% of your income, above and beyond what you’re already giving away, to be a tangible blessing to people you don’t yet know, is a much more specific and measurable way to approach the same discipline. Take some time with your group to go back in Mark (or throughout the other three gospels) and review the behavior and teaching of Jesus, looking for specific practices that you could emulate during this season.

It’s very important to understand that the goal of these practices is not to impress God in any way, or to earn something, whether on earth or in heaven. Instead, these Kingdom practices have two primary goals: (1) to form us more into the likeness of Jesus, and (2) to make us a blessing in the world around us. For further discussion on the theory behind Lenten practices, I would encourage you to read “The Experiments” section of the “Discipleship According to Jesus” study guide from spring 2012. (An online copy can be found at www.yorkalliance.org/#/resources/study-guides.)

Some examples:

• Commit to arising early for 45-60 minutes of prayer each day before the sun comes up.
• Spend a certain percentage of your income in a way that intentionally blesses someone else.
• Serve the unlovable and marginalized of society at least once a week by volunteering with an organization which serves that population.
• Fast from all (or some) media, and use that time to intentionally gather with community, study the Word, and/or serve others.
• Buy a lunch once each week, find someone to give it to, and pray for that person as you fast during the time you would typically eat lunch.
In this passage, we are given a series of test questions that are posed to Jesus. Like many of us, they are questions being asked by those who recognize who Jesus is, but would like to find a way not to follow Him. Each question fails to give the required loophole, and so we’re left with a choice: Will we merely listen, or will we hear and obey?
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 11:27 – 12:44. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• Starting at the beginning of the passage listed above, what are all of the questions/challenges posed to Jesus?

• Look over your list of questions. Why might Mark have lumped all of these questions together in his narrative?
• In Mark 12:41-44, there’s no specific question or challenge, and Jesus is only interacting with His disciples. Yet, in vs. 38-40, Mark gives us a clue that He’s still responding to the religious leaders of the day. What clue does he give? What might be the message to the religious leaders?

• List the core teachings of Jesus that emerge out of this passage.

Application:
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 12:13-44. Then, read the following passages:


What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?
• Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
In our culture, asking questions is a way of gaining information. If I want to know how the new iPhone works, I ask someone (or ask Google). And if I’m asking that question, it’s typically for one of two reasons: Either I have one and don’t know how to work it, and thus am trying to gain information that I can utilize in my life, or I’m just curious and want to understand it.

However, there is a third possibility as to why I’m asking the question. Imagine I’m interacting with one of “those people.” You know, the ones who act like a typical twelve-year old and act as though they are experts on everything. Imagine that I made a comment about the iPhone and, with great superiority, “that person” made a comment that alluded to their deep knowledge of the iPhone. In that circumstance, I might ask a question just to see if they actually know what they’re talking about! However, in that instance, the other two motivations are gone: I no longer want to actually use the information and I don’t have any real curiosity about the answer—I’m simply trying to trap the person I’m talking to.

Read Mark 12:13-34.

• Of the three motivations listed above, why are the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and Scribes asking Jesus questions?

• What are some of the words and phrases that indicate this to you?

• What do the last sentences in verses 17 and 34 indicate about the hearts of those who were listening?
• Did their questions and Jesus’ subsequent answers result in any change of behavior?

• Read the following passages:
  o 2 Timothy 3:2-7
  o Luke 12:35-48
  o James 1:19-25
  How might these passages apply to those who are questioning Jesus in this passage?

Gaining knowledge, particularly about the nature and character of God, without any desire for a changed life, might actually be more dangerous than not gaining knowledge at all.

**Application:**
• Are there areas where you are interested to understand what God has to say about something, but aren’t willing to follow Him?

• What’s an area in which you know the truth of God, but you’re still seeking to have your life match up with that truth?
Kingdom Values

Often, we miss the truly revolutionary concepts that Jesus taught simply due to familiarity. When Jesus taught, what He said was often truly shocking to those who heard Him and ran directly counter to the values of the day. Frankly, if we would truly listen, the same would be true today—the things that Jesus teaches often run counter to our value system as well.

Read Mark 12:28-34.
• Paraphrase the two commands that Jesus lists as being the greatest.

• Think about those commands. What’s counter-cultural about them?

Read Mark 12:38-40.
• What is Jesus’ main point in these verses?

• In what ways do our religious systems operate opposite of this teaching?

Read Mark 12:41-44.
• How does Jesus measure giving?
• If you think about very generous, philanthropic people, does Jesus’ definition come to mind? Why or why not?


It’s easy to see these “blessings” and “woes” as saying that people with certain amounts of money or in certain life situations are “holier” than others. However, as He constantly does, Jesus is talking about a true heart transformation that will always result in changed values!

• In each of these cases, how does a heart transformation change the way that we value these things?
  o Poor/Rich
  o Hungry/Full
  o Weeping/Laughing
  o Ridiculed/Honored

Application:
• What is the evidence of a change to Kingdom values in your life?

• In what areas, if you’re honest, do you still prescribe to worldly values?
LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What was/is your favorite chore to do around the house when you were growing up?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 12:13-44

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- Are you engaging in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it’s going and what impact it’s making.
- Are there areas where you are more interested in hearing what Jesus has to say than you are to actually obeying Him?
- The questioning and responses of Jesus might be divided into five general categories: Politics, Theology, Ethics, Religion, and Economics. Is there one area that you find harder to obey Jesus in than another? Why is that?
- What’s something in your life that you tend to see yourself as having a “right” to, not as a steward of, God’s stuff?
- Do you feel like you can be fully authentic in this group? Why or why not? What can we do to develop that kind of environment?
- In what area of your life do you feel as though you live truly sacrificially? Do you feel like we ever act truly sacrificially as a group?

Works: The transformation of our lives should be a glowing declaration of the work of Jesus within us. (See Matthew 5:14-16) Therefore, real connection, particularly with the community of faith, is the best witness to the real person of Jesus. As we journey through this Lenten season, discuss as a group ways to connect with those in your life that are in need of meeting Jesus. It might be appropriate for the entire group to connect in some cases; in others, it might be best for just a specific portion of the group to connect. However, don’t just wait for it to happen!

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
Hearing and Obeying
Mark 12:13-44

Sermon Notes:
Jesus lays out a concise teaching of what the "end" will be like. He responds to the disciples' question with a simple but clear reiteration of His constant message: Trust and obey. It's not about how much we know or what we have figured out; it's about a simple trust in Christ and a willingness to walk in His ways.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 13:1-37. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

- What are some of the themes that you notice as you read this teaching from Jesus?

- In Mark 13:3-23, Jesus seems to be describing an earthly event that will happen in a specific geographic location. Look closely at this passage. How would you know that?
• In Mark 13:24-27, Jesus shifts His language to talk about a universal, apocalyptic event. How do you know?

• In Mark 13:32-37, what is the repeated warning of Jesus? What does that mean?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 13:1-37. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 24:1-51

- What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

- Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?
• Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

**Application:**
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
Watch and Be Ready

Literally, from the beginning of time (at least the beginning of recorded history), men and women have been fascinated with the end of time. As I write this, there are those who are anxiously awaiting the arrival of December 21, 2012 because they believe that the end point of the Mayan calendar signals the end of the world. (Obviously, I don’t believe that will happen, or I wouldn’t be writing this. And if it did, you wouldn’t be reading this.)

However, while this is the longest single teaching that Mark records for us, the focus isn’t largely on specifics. Despite that, there are a few hallmarks that Jesus tells the disciples to watch for.

Read Mark 13:5-23.

• What specific signs are the disciples to watch for?

• What declaration do verses 7 and 8 make about these events?

Michael Card notes that “each detail of Jesus’ words found its fulfillment in the four decades leading up to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.”

Five major earthquakes, three great famines, political confusion and upheaval, heavy persecution of Christians, and even two events that have

been labeled the abomination of desolation. During one such event, the Zealots anointing a clown as high priest, Jewish Christians fled to the city of Pella because they so clearly recognized this prophecy being fulfilled. Card, along with many other theologians, conclude then that the signs have passed and we are indeed living in the end times. However, they also note that we have been for nearly 2000 years.

Jesus doesn’t seem concerned that we know the precise time or day. In fact, He Himself doesn’t know. (Mark 13:32—see tomorrow’s study) However, there is one thing that He seems quite concerned about.

• Read Mark 13:32-37. What seems to be Jesus’ biggest concern?

In Mark 13:10, Jesus tells us what we are to be doing as we wait. Our calling is not to figure out some Biblical code and determine the moment of Jesus’ return—rather, we are to proclaim the gospel to all nations.

Application:
• If you knew Jesus was returning tomorrow, what would you do today? What is stopping you from doing those things anyway?

• What are some ways that it seems the church is currently “asleep” as we await His return? Are you “asleep” in those same areas?

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22 Ibid.
Willful Ignorance

Near the end of this long teaching of Jesus, He makes a profound declaration, the weight of which can easily be missed.

Read Mark 13:32.

- Who does not know when the Son of Man will be coming in the clouds with power and glory (Mark 13:26)?

- Who does know?

Jesus is fully God. The second Person of the Trinity. All-powerful, and all-knowing. Yet, He doesn’t know the day or the hour of His return!

- Read John 10:30. What else is profound about Jesus not knowing the day or the hour?

The challenge of Jesus remaining fully God and yet being limited in His knowledge is one that has challenged theologians for centuries. Read Philippians 2:5-7.
• When Jesus “made Himself nothing,” what are some things that might have been a part of that?

• What does Paul call us to do in Philippians 2:5?

• How does this parallel what Jesus calls us to do in Mark 13:33-37?

Just as Jesus was obedient without full knowledge, we are called to do the same. We are called to stay awake, alert and faithfully working as we await the Master’s return!

Application:
• How often do you think about Jesus’ return? Should you think about it more often? Why?

• What are some things that you could/should be intentionally doing right now as you wait for His return?
**LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet**

**Welcome** one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What are you most looking forward to in 2013?”

**Worship** Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

**Word:** Mark 13

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- Are you engaging in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it’s going and what impact it’s making.
- Do you feel like you’re ready for Jesus to return? Why or why not?
- How often do you think about the return of Jesus? Is that something you pray for?
- Jesus talked quite a bit about the reality of suffering prior to His return. Yet, we don’t suffer much for our faith. Why do you think that is?
- Jesus calls us to remain awake and alert as we await His return. In what ways are we “asleep” as a church? What about you personally?
- What’s one thing that we can do as a group to be intentional about waiting for the return of Jesus?

**Works:** Jesus is coming back. There will be a day when all work will cease, and that judgment will come. Until then, we are called to be about the business of God in the world, investing our lives into the lives of others, seeking to lead them toward Jesus. Who are you investing your life in? Pray intentionally, by name, for one of the people that you’re investing your life in, and pray that God would create in us a new awareness of eternity that causes us to take risks in talking to others about Him!

*Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!*
www.yorkalliance.org
The End
Mark 13:1-37

Sermon Notes:
Worship rarely makes sense. The worth of Jesus calls us to a radical response that will always be questioned and often be chastised by those who long to worship and yet remain in control. Through a radical act of extravagant worship, we are called to respond to the reality of Jesus with radical extravagance in our lives as well.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 14:1-11. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• As you read the passage, what are some things that you immediately notice about the scene?

• Mark, as he often does, begins and ends this passage with short “bookends” that highlight the middle of the passage. What are they?

• In verses 3-5, is there anyone who agrees with this action by the woman in the story?
• What are the reasons that Jesus gives for this act being an appropriate one? How do you think she reacted to these reasons? The disciples?

• Look at Jesus’ final declaration in vs. 9. Think back in the book of Mark. Has Jesus ever made such a declaration about the disciples or anyone else? How do you think the disciples felt hearing what Jesus said? (Reference Mark 9:33-37 and Mark 10:35-45)

**Application:**
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 14:1-11. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 26:1-16
- John 12:2-8

- What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

- Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

- Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?
Why might John, who was writing more generally to all who would believe and focused heavily on the deity of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
A few years ago, I fell in love with the joys of riding a road bike. The quiet speed, the ability to engage the geography over long distances, the physicality of climbing hills, and the mental acumen required for a swift but safe descent—each of these and more drove me to my bike. In order to truly engage this sport, however, sacrifice was needed. The equipment (the bike itself, the necessary gear and, of course, the all important unnecessary but desired gear) had a steep price tag. However, far more expensive was the time required. Hours and hours each week were spent “in the saddle,” pedaling for miles through the tri-county area. I gladly paid the price.

We’re always willing to sacrifice for the things we value. Today, sadly, I haven’t ridden a bike in months. The demands of work paired with four children mean that the time required is no longer worth it. We always sacrifice for the things we value.

Read Mark 14:1-11.

• What does this woman sacrifice?

• Using the footnotes in your Bible, can you determine how much this was worth?

The protest that immediately followed was due to the alternate uses for this sum of money. However, we can move too quickly into the protest and forget about the act of worship. Over 300 denarii would be the equivalent of about a year’s salary for a laborer! Think about holding a year’s income in your hand, and then literally pouring it over Jesus. That’s what this woman did! Think about an object you could buy for a year’s salary. (Google search if necessary!) Would you be willing to give that to Jesus simply as an act of worship?
Read Matthew 26:6-9.

- In Mark’s account, the “protesters” remain nameless. However, according to Matthew, who is protesting this act?

- By their protest, what are the disciples implying?

We’re always willing to sacrifice for the things we value. The more we’re willing to sacrifice, the more we value something.

Now, go back and read Mark 12:41-44.

- What are the parallels between these two women?

Radical sacrifice represents radical love. The motivation for the sacrifice is what ultimately justifies the cost of it. What is worship worth?

**Application:**

- What are you not willing to sacrifice for Jesus? Is that evident in your daily life?
The Poor

Don’t you hate it when people “put words in your mouth?” Meaning, they say that you’ve said something that you have actually never said, or at the very least, that you definitely didn’t mean. For Jesus, both while He was on earth and certainly since His ascension, that’s a constant state of affairs. I can’t number the conversations that I’ve been in when someone says, “Like Jesus says…” or “Like the Bible says…” and proceeds to say something that has never come out of Jesus’ mouth or been on a page of Holy Scripture, unless it was in the form of a Post-It note.23

In the midst of this short narrative, we find one of those “sayings” of Jesus that is often misquoted and misunderstood.

Read Mark 14:7.

• How would you paraphrase what Jesus says here?

Over the years, many have taken this verse as permission to be devoted to God and yet ignore the plight of the poor among us. However, like many of the things that Jesus said, this actually has Old Testament roots and, in order to understand what Jesus meant, we’ll need to dig in back there a bit…


• How would you summarize this portion of the law?

23 I have examples. Oh, do I have examples. However, I’m refraining for the sake of confidentiality, reputation, and general good manners.
• Read vs. 4-5, and then compare them with vs. 11. What is the call on the people of God in order to help the poor?

Could it be that this oft-cited verse is actually

“an ironic rebuke?... God admonished the Israelites that if they hardened their hearts, their eyes became stingy, and greed and selfishness consumed them, there would indeed be poor among them… The presence of the poor is an indictment to all.”24

Read James 2:15-17 and 1 John 3:17.
• What is the call on each of us as Christians?

Could it be that what Jesus was truly saying was that the kind of devotion to Him and to the Kingdom that this woman was displaying through her sacrifice would actually end poverty for good? Rather than accept the reality of the poor among them, Jesus was challenging the disciples, and us as well, to be devoted enough to Him that we’re willing to do something about it!

Application:
• Does your devotion to Jesus impact other people around you? Who and in what ways?

LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What’s the best concert or sporting event that you’ve ever attended?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 14:1-11

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- Are you engaging in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it’s going and what impact it’s making.
- How would you define worship?
- In your life and experience, what most closely relates to the flask of expensive ointment to you?
- Is there such a thing as “too far” or “too radical” in worship?
- Does your devotion to Jesus impact other people around you? In what ways?
- How does living in community facilitate sacrificial worship? Does this group do that? Is there any way that it could hinder it?

Works: For each of us, there are things that hold us back from being completely bold and demonstrative in our faith: reputation, doubt, perceptions of others, etc. Could it be that this thing is our alabaster flask? What would it look like for us to sacrifice that idea and live boldly before those around us? Take some time to pray for your own hearts, as well as one another. Pray for a specific person that you need to be bold with in your faith this week—then, follow-up during the week with how you did!

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
The Scandal of Celebration
Mark 14:1-11

Sermon Notes:
The pacing of Mark's gospel has been brisk throughout, but it builds to frenetic as we follow Jesus and His disciples through the Last Supper, into the garden, and finally at His arrest. Like the disciples, we try to follow but, ultimately, like Peter, we find that our best efforts are never enough. It's only in His willing sacrifice that we can truly have life.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 14:12-52. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• This passage is full of activity and detail. Write a brief outline below of what happens within these verses.

• Jesus makes several ominous prophecies in this passage. What are they?
• In the garden, what are the words that Jesus prays to the Father? What are the implications of a prayer like that for our suffering?

• Answer Jesus’ implied question in vs. 48-49. Why do you think they came to arrest Jesus in the dark and with swords and clubs?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 14:12-52. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 26:17-56

What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?
• Why might John, who was writing more generally to all who would believe and focused heavily on the deity of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

**Application:**

• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
Seder 2.0

In our modern world of technology, the updated version is almost always the best. In fact, with certain pieces of technology, it’s a common assumption that purchasing the first version is a bad idea—better to wait for the 2.0 version to come out, when the bugs are fixed and it works.

The Seder meal had commemorated the Passover and God’s deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt for over a thousand years. However, despite the repeated sacrifices, the people of God were still in their sin. It wasn’t that the Passover hadn’t been effective—the nation of Israel had truly been freed from slavery in Egypt. However, it was incomplete. The people of God were still captive to their sin.

The Seder meal was designed to remember four promises that God made to Moses in Exodus 6:6-7. Read that passage.

• What were the four promises?

Freedom from Egypt. Deliverance from slavery. Redemption. New relationship with God. All four are weighty promises. Each of them was commemorated by one of four cups that were used over the course of the evening meal.

Read Mark’s account of the third cup in Mark 14:22-25.

• What did Jesus say instead of the typical blessing of the third cup?
• Which is the third cup of the Seder meal? (Hint: the promises were remembered in the order they were made in Exodus 6)

In ancient times, covenants were sealed in blood. The covenant relationship between God and Israel had, for well over a thousand years, been defined by the law. Read Exodus 24:6-8, when the law covenant was put in place.

• How is that significant as it relates to Jesus’ words in Mark 14:24?

Go back and read Mark 14:12, and then think about Mark’s record of the Passover meal, as well as those records of Matthew, Luke and John, if you’ve read them. What element of the Passover meal seems to be missing?

Tim Keller makes a fascinating suggestion, although it’s ultimately an argument from silence:

There is no mention of lamb at this Passover meal. What kind of Passover would be celebrated without a lamb? There was no lamb on the table because the Lamb of God was at the table… [He’s saying] I am the Lamb of God to which all the other lambs pointed, the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.25

Application:

• With this understanding, write a brief prayer thanking Jesus for His sacrifice.

The Confounding of Peter

Particularly through this section of Mark’s gospel, it’s fascinating to remember that Peter is the likely source of the information that Mark is recording. Historically, Peter has been universally recognized as the leader of the disciples. He is listed first in every listing of disciples. In every instance when Jesus called a smaller group of disciples to Him, Peter was among them.

Yet, Peter’s record was far from perfect. We’ve already seen him called “Satan” by Jesus and chastised by the Father within the space of two chapters (see Mark 8-9). However, Thursday night through Friday will be the hardest 24 hours of Peter’s life.

Read Mark 14:26-50.

• What three statements does Jesus make in vs. 27?

• Which one does Peter respond to in vs. 29?

• Do you think he even paid attention to the other two, or just stopped listening after the first one? How might that have changed the next 24 hours of his life?

When Jesus is praying, He simply asks Peter, James and John to remain and “watch.” However, they fall asleep. (vs. 37 and 40)
• When Jesus first returns in vs. 38, what does He say to Peter? How does this relate to Peter’s declaration in verses 29 and 31?

• Read Romans 7:15-20. What is Paul’s frustration?

• Look back at Peter’s (lack of) response to Jesus in vs. 40. How do these parallel?

• Read Romans 7:24-8:1. What is the hope that Paul (and Peter, and you and me) clings to?

Application:
• Are there times that you only listen to part of what Jesus says and miss the promise of God and the opportunity for hope? In what ways?

• What is an area where your “spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak?” Take time to submit that area to Jesus in prayer.
LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What’s the best meal that you’ve ever had?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 14:12-52

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- Are you engaging in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it’s going and what impact it’s making.
- Do you remember a specific time when the celebration of communion was especially meaningful to you? Describe that time.
- What is your response to the grace of God in your life?
- Are there areas in your life where you “sleep” as Peter, James and John did? (i.e.—stop paying attention to the spiritual activity around you?)
- Are there times that you only listen to a part of what Jesus says and miss the promise of God and the opportunity for hope?
- How do we “watch and pray” with one another as we go through suffering and distress? On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do we do this as a group?

Works: When we fully realize the grace of Jesus toward us, it compels us into the world around us. (See 2 Corinthians 5:14-21) Take time as a group to contemplate the grace of Jesus in your life. Then, pray very specifically, by name, for those in your sphere of influence that aren’t experiencing that grace. The promises of God are freedom, deliverance, redemption, and relationship—anyone who is not experiencing each of these is missing a part of the life that Jesus promised us. Pray for opportunities to both live these realities and speak of them in the world around you!

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
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Sermon Notes:

Eat and Run
Mark 14:12-52
As Jesus goes through the various trials, He is questioned over and over again as they seek to find a charge with which to condemn Him. However, in the end, it's simply His identity that secures His fate. Those around respond to His identity with condemnation, denial, and amazement, but refuse the only proper response: worship. How will we respond?
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 14:26 – 15:5. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

- Starting with Mark 14:26, record Peter’s activity. Reference John 18:10 for an activity of Peter that’s easily missed in Mark’s account.

- Mark records Jesus making only two statements during these two trials. What are they?

- Why might that be significant?
Beginning in vs. 53-54, Mark uses his familiar “bookend” device once again, placing the second bookend at the end of the chapter. What are the two incidents?

What does Jesus do in the middle of the “bookends” that is highlighted by this technique?

Application:
- What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 14:53 – 15:5. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 26:57 – 27:14
- John 18:15-18, 24-38

What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?
• Why might John, who was writing more generally to all who would believe and focused heavily on the deity of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
Courtroom Reversal

Rabbis, such as Jesus as well as the High Priests and ruling authorities, would have had the vast majority of the Old Testament memorized word for word. This intimate knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures means that nearly every word spoken has the potential to be an allusion to an Old Testament teaching.

Look at Jesus’ initial encounter with the Sanhedrin, which is a ruling council made up of the high priests and prominent Sadducees and Pharisees.26

- Based on Mark 14:55-59, what was the problem with the case against Jesus?

- In vs. 62, what did Jesus say of Himself?

- What was the response of the High Priest and the rest of the courtroom when Jesus made this statement?

26 Footnote on Mark 14:53 in the ESV Study Bible, (Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2008.) pg. 1929.
The courtroom completely breaks down when Jesus makes this statement. Although the witnesses can’t agree and they can’t find any real charge against Him, Jesus is suddenly condemned. Why?

- Read Daniel 7:13-14, and look for the title Jesus used: “Son of man.” What does this title indicate would be true of Jesus?

- Now, read Psalm 110, looking for the other phrase that Jesus used: “at my right hand.” What is Jesus saying that is true of Him?

There are literally hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah which Jesus could have referenced in His answer. However, He deliberately said, directly to the High Priest (who was the “judge” in this trial), that He was the Judge. “There’s been an enormous reversal. He is judge over the entire world, being judged by the world.”

Application:

- Does the reality of Jesus as judge give you fear or comfort? Why is that?

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Denial

Peter’s denial of Jesus is a familiar story, but it has an incredible number of layers. Mark’s recording of Peter’s words, as they’ve likely come from Peter himself, intentionally makes a number of these connections.

First, re-read Mark 14:53-54 and 66-72.

• How many times does Peter deny Jesus?

• Look back at Mark 14:32-42. How many times did Peter fail Jesus by falling asleep while he was to be watching?

• What is Peter’s first verbal denial, recorded in vs. 68?

• Look up the following passages from Mark’s gospel:
  o Mark 4:12-13
  o Mark 6:52
  o Mark 8:17-18
  o Mark 9:32

  What is the consistent question/statement in these passages?

By using the same wording and language, what is Mark indicating of Peter?
Look at the parable of the soils, which Mark positions as the main teaching through which we are to interpret what it means to follow Jesus.

- Read Mark 4:3-20. Based on Peter’s actions, what kind of soil is he showing himself to be? Why?

However, maybe the most pronounced is the parallel between Peter’s confession of Christ in Mark 8 and his denial in Mark 14.

- Read Mark 8:27-30, 38. What does Jesus say about those who deny His identity before man?

However, Mark also intentionally records Peter’s response. While there are many unanswered questions about Peter, we know how he responded to the realization of his denial of Jesus. Read Mark 14:72.

- What does Peter do?

- Read Joel 2:13-14. What is the promise of God over Peter’s disobedience based on his heart response?

**Application:**

- How do you reflect the identity of Jesus in the world around you? In what ways do you deny Him?
LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “What’s your favorite thing to watch on TV?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 14:53 – 15:5

• How is Jesus working in your life right now?
• Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
• Are you engaging in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it’s going and what impact it’s making.
• If you were on trial for being a follower of Jesus, what kind of evidence would there be to convict you?
• Does the idea of Jesus as judge give you fear or comfort? Why?
• We live in a world that affirms Jesus as a good person and teacher, but not as Lord and God. Why is that such an offensive claim?
• How do you reflect the true identity of Jesus in the world around you?
• In what ways do you deny the true identity of Jesus by your actions?
• How does this community affirm the identity of Jesus? How do we reflect that identity to one another? How do we reflect that in the world around us?

Works: We are called to be those who confess Jesus in the world. Of course, that’s a very difficult task, and like Peter, we can often find ourselves denying Him even though we long to be faithful. Break into pairs or threes and talk about the challenges that you have during a typical week in standing up for the true identity of Jesus. Pray for each other to live and speak faithfully over the course of the week. Determine a time between this meeting and next week’s meeting when you will check in on one another to see how you’re doing in this process.

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
Sermon Notes:
In an incredible twist of irony, the One who is life Himself experiences death. The wage for sin is death, which was the judgment pronounced after the first Adam sinned. However, Jesus as the second Adam bears the punishment as the perfect sacrifice. At the cross, every shadow found in the law is brought to reality, justice is fulfilled, and in His death we all are offered life.
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 15:1-47. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• Read Mark 15:1-15. What strikes you about Pilate’s behavior?

• Read Mark 15:16-32. List the indignities and abuse that Jesus suffered in just these few hours prior to His death.

• Based on the account of the trials and the confession of Peter in Mark 8, what’s ironic about the sign that’s placed on Jesus’ cross?
• Read Mark 15:33-41. Scholars list vs. 39 as the pinnacle moment in the second half of Mark’s gospel. Why might that be? Read John 19:35. What might be the connection between these two verses?

• Who are remaining faithfully with Jesus to the end, according to Mark’s account?

**Application:**
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 15:6-47. Then, read the following passages:

• Matthew 27:15-66
• Luke 23:13-56
• John 18:39 – 19:42

• What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

• Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

• Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?
Why might John, who was writing more generally to all who would believe and focused heavily on the deity of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:

What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
Imagining the Scene

Author and artist Michael Card, throughout his study of Mark’s Gospel, encourages readers to “engage with the text at the level of your imagination.”28 Year after year, the story of the crucifixion of Jesus has been repeatedly portrayed—not only in churches around the world, but in Hollywood, on Broadway, and in various other media outlets. It’s become quite easy to “skim” the text because of our deep familiarity with the story.

However, what happens if we slow down dramatically and simply imagine? Start in Mark 15:20 and read very slowly through the end of the chapter. Below, write down details that stick out to you, and use the details that Mark gives to imagine the scene that’s playing out before us.

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As we imagine, there are questions that immediately emerge, many of which can be answered through the rest of the gospel accounts or other portions of Scripture. A few such questions are listed below, along with some references that might help begin to answer them:

- Where are the disciples? (John 19:26)
- What happened to the centurion? (John 19:35)
- Why are Simon of Cyrene, Alexander, and Rufus named? (Romans 16:13?)
- Why are only three women named? (Mark 9:2, 14:33)
- Which curtain in the temple ripped? (No specific reference—there are two, and we don’t know for sure which one was ripped.)

What other questions emerge as you imagine the scene?

It’s hard for us to dwell on the extreme pain and suffering of Jesus. However, it’s important for us not to rush over the incredible suffering, but to imagine as best we can the extent of the suffering, which becomes for us a reflection of the depth of His love.

**Application:**

- How does a deeper understanding of the suffering of Jesus affect you as you endure suffering?
Love and Mercy

Our world is full of what seems to be senseless violence and suffering. At the time of this writing, our nation is deeply grieving the shooting deaths of 26 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, 20 of them 6 or 7 year olds. Horrific tragedy. Each day over 30,000 people will die of starvation. Young children are kidnapped and forced to be sex slaves. War. Poverty. Violence. Corruption. Natural disasters. Death. It’s horrific.

What does the cross have to say in the midst of such a world?

• Read Mark 15:33-38. What did Jesus say from the cross?

• Read Romans 8:32. How would you paraphrase what this verse is saying?

• Read Hebrews 13:5. What makes this promise possible?

• Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. Why should we approach this broken world with hope?
The love of God towards us is shown most clearly at the cross. Along with love, the cross also graphically displays the mercy of God given to all who are in Christ. Consider the following:

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. How would you paraphrase this verse?

- Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What is our hope in suffering?

- Read Romans 12:1, 9-18. List below what becomes possible in our lives because of the mercy of God.

There’s much more that could be said about both the love and mercy of Jesus shown at the cross. In fact, entire books have been written on these topics. The point is not to be exhaustive, but rather to recognize that in the pain and suffering of Jesus, we are given life and hope, even in difficulty.

Application:

- When do you most struggle to believe the love and mercy of God toward you? Why is that?

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29 Two great ones: The Cross of Christ by John Stott and The Atonement by Leon Morris. Also, In My Place Condemned He Stood is a fantastic collection of essays compiled by J.I. Packer and Mark Dever. All of these are highly recommended.
**LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet**

**Welcome** one another in Jesus’ name!

Icebreaker: “What are your Easter traditions? What makes it meaningful to you and your family?”

**Worship** Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

**Word:** Mark 15:6-47

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- Are you engaging in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it’s going and what impact it’s making.
- Does remembering the suffering of Jesus change the way that you approach the world around you? In what ways?
- Are there times that you feel like Jesus is angry or disappointed with you? How does the cross speak into that?
- When do you most struggle to believe the love and mercy of God toward you? Why is that?
- What reminds you of the truth of the gospel? How do you re-orient your heart when you get off track?
- In your experience, what role does community play in living out the gospel? Does this community do that?

**Works:** When we live out of the love, mercy, and acceptance of Jesus, our lives themselves are testimonies to the world. However, we need to put words with our lives—otherwise, we simply become “good” people in a world full of people trying to be good! Continue to pray specifically for those with whom your life connects. This time of year often provides great opportunities to speak truth to those around us—pray into those opportunities! Also, look for ways that you as a community can embody the Good News of the crucified and risen Savior!

**Note:** Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!

www.yorkalliance.org
Sermon Notes:
The great Story which has been narrated for us has come to an abrupt end, and hope is gone. The hero has been brutally murdered. His followers have been scattered. All we are left with are a few women, nobodys in a male-driven culture, re-visiting the tragic scene as the credits roll. And then... an empty tomb. A man in white. A command to tell after so many commands not to. The evidence points to the as yet unseen reality, and we are left with the women to decide: How will we respond to the evidence? Will fear and disbelief define us, or will we ultimately follow the evidence and experience the proof?
Going With the Flow

Turn to Mark 15:21 – 16:8. Before you begin to read, pray this prayer:

Jesus, I come to Your Word because I want to follow You. I believe You are the best Way for me to live, the fount of all that is True, and the only place I can find real Life. As I read Your Word, please send the Holy Spirit to enlighten my eyes. Allow me to engage this account as if for the first time. Show me the details that are important for me to see, give me insight into what these truths mean for my life, and then give me the grace and courage to live them out in faith, for Your glory and honor, and for my joy. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

A note on the ending of Mark:
Most Bibles, including the ESV, contain an additional 12 verses (Mark 16:9-20) that appear in brackets following Mark 16:8. For the sake of this study, I have chosen to omit those verses for several reasons. First of all, there is a large amount of textual evidence supporting that verses 9-20 were added later by a different author. Almost all of the earliest manuscripts don’t have these verses. The language and style is dramatically different from the rest of the gospel of Mark. The transition from vs. 8 to vs. 9 is awkward, changing assumed subjects (from the women to Jesus) with no explanation or transition. The vast majority of scholars that I’ve read have concluded that Mark 16:9-20 were not a part of the original. However, it’s also important to note that these verses are largely repeating material that is found elsewhere in the gospels, and no point of doctrine is affected by the inclusion or omission of these verses.

Now, read the passage slowly.

• As you read the end of chapter 15, what is your emotional response?

• When you read 16:1-8, what does that response change to?
• Based on the end of the Gospel, with what emotions does Mark apparently desire us to leave His gospel?

• What are the women carrying as they approach the tomb? What does that tell us about their expectations upon arrival?

• Who does the angel instruct the women to tell? Considering Peter’s denial, and given that Peter was the likely source of information that Mark recorded, why is that significant?

**Application:**
• What jumps out to you in this passage? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life in order to obey what is being taught in this passage?
Reading Parallel

First, re-read Mark 16:1-8. Then, read the following passages:

- Matthew 28:1-8 (as well as vs. 9-20)
- Luke 24:1-8 (as well as vs. 9-53)
- John 20:1 (as well as 20:2 – 21:25)

In addition to the truly parallel passages, read the additional resurrection accounts in the gospels, as noted in parentheses above.

- What do you notice in these passages that wasn’t immediately clear in Mark’s account?

- Why might Matthew, who was writing to Jews and emphasized the coming of the Kingdom, have included the details that he did?

- Why might Luke, who was writing to Greeks and Gentile skeptics and focused on the perfection and mercy of Jesus, have included the details that he did?
• Why might John, who was writing more generally to all who would believe and focused heavily on the deity of Jesus, have included the details that he did?

• How do these passages help you more completely understand Mark’s account of these events?

Application:
• What jumps out to you in these passages? Why?

• What’s one practical thing that you can do in your life to obey what is being taught in these passages?
The Old Testament is filled with prophecies regarding the person and work of Jesus. Throughout the gospel of Mark, we’ve seen that He had an incredible grasp on those prophecies, and recognized their fulfillment within His life as it played out. In hindsight, the same must be said of any honest person who approaches these Messianic prophecies and examines the life of Jesus as well.

In addition to the prophecies that are sprinkled throughout the Old Testament, there are a few places that are so striking in their description of the life and death of Jesus that the connection is nearly impossible to deny. Isaiah 53 is one such place. Another, and the one that Jesus seemed focused on at the end of His life, is Psalm 22.


- Write down verses from the Psalm that parallel Jesus’ life and experience, particularly in death.
Now, read Mark 16:1-8. Then, read the rest of Psalm 22 (vs. 19-31).

- Write down verses from the second half of this Psalm that foreshadow the victory of Jesus.

As Jesus died on the cross, it’s quite likely that He was meditating on Psalm 22 which He quoted several times on the cross. Could it be that when He rose, that same Psalm was still on His mind? Except this time, He was focusing on vs. 31: “they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.”

**Application:**

- Does recognition of Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies strengthen your faith in Him? Why or why not?

- What hope does the resurrection offer for you personally?
Looking for Jesus

Mark’s abrupt ending to his gospel in 16:8 is very characteristic of his style “given to a sense of immediacy. In a sense, every other moment had been leading up to this one.”\(^{30}\) In generations that followed, it seems that readers were so confused and disturbed by this ending that they pieced together aspects of the other gospels in order to create a “proper” ending for Mark. (See note on the first page of this week’s study.) However, with an eye and ear to the rest of Mark’s gospel, we can get a sense of the “perfection of the original ending.”\(^{31}\)

First, read Mark 16:1-8.

• What is the clear thing that is missing from this account?

As Card declares: “Though it is frequently used as a metaphor for the resurrection, the empty tomb is not the final proof; it is only a piece of evidence. Only Jesus is the final proof.”\(^{32}\) So where is He? And why didn’t Mark include Him in the ending of the gospel?

• Read Mark 5:35-42. What did Jesus tell the synagogue ruler to do before He healed his daughter? (vs. 36)

• Read Mark 8:27 – 9:8. Is Peter’s understanding of Jesus’ identity created at the transfiguration, or simply confirmed?


\(^{31}\) Ibid. I’m grateful to Michael Card for these insights, and many, many others throughout both volumes of this study.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., pg. 191.
• Read Mark 9:14-27. Does the man’s belief come before or after the healing of the son?

• Read Mark 15:32. How does Mark characterize the requirements for belief in the chief priests and scribes?

Mark leaves us with a choice. Will we believe before we see? Jesus is alive—Matthew, Luke, and John unmistakably record it. Paul references many witnesses to the fact. (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). But these three women, like us, are left with an empty tomb and a promise. Will we believe?

Finally, look at 1 Peter 1:8. Could it be that this ending was orchestrated by Peter himself? “Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory…” May it be so.

**Application:**

• Why do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus?

• How have you seen Jesus in your life this week? Do moments like that strengthen your faith? Why or why not?
LIFE Group Facilitation Sheet

Welcome one another in Jesus’ name!
Icebreaker: “Do you remember a time in your life that you were really surprised or shocked?”

Worship Jesus through Scripture, music, singing, and prayer. Be creative! Invite Him to the center of your gathering.

Word: Mark 16:1-8

- How is Jesus working in your life right now?
- Has anything specific jumped out to you, either in this passage or in the study guide this week?
- Did you engage in a Lenten discipline as a group? If so, talk about how it went and what impact it made.
- Does recognition of Jesus’ fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies strengthen your faith? Why or why not?
- What hope does the resurrection offer for you personally?
- What hope does the resurrection offer for a group like ours? For our community? For our world?
- Why do you believe in the resurrection?
- How does the reality of the resurrection affect your “everyday” life?

Works: Take time to simply pray blessing over specific people in your life. Take a few minutes in silence and ask God to reveal to you a person that needs to know Him in a new and deeper way and for whom you need to pray. Then, share their first names, and pray specifically for each of them. Find a time during the week to touch base with them, and ask God to show you either (a) how to be a blessing to them, or (b) the way He already is blessing them. Report back next week on the activity of God!

Note: Please check the website for any announcements and upcoming events!
www.yorkalliance.org
New Life
Mark 16:1-8

Sermon Notes:
Phew. For so many reasons, this has probably been the most laborious of all of the guides that I’ve written over the years. As I come to the end of it, there are so many mixed feelings bouncing around in my head and heart. Jesus is so clearly displayed in Mark’s gospel. His way of living, His love for others, His focus on eternity—they all so deeply challenge the way I go about life. I began writing the first volume with this prayer: “God, make us to be like Jesus. Help us to stop hiding behind being more like Jesus, and then being satisfied with pathetically small steps over years and years. Give us a fire in our hearts to be like Him.” Honestly, that’s still my prayer; but I feel like I’m further from that reality than when I began. Staring into the heart of Jesus has left me humbled and deeply aware of how much I fall short; I’m so grateful for His grace in my life. I pray the same is true for you.

As always, these study guides are the fruit of many people’s sacrifice. There were those who had appointments bumped until after the first of the year, coffee dates that were pushed back again (Thanks, Chris!), and phone conversations that needed to be bumped and bumped and bumped. Thank you all for being willing to grant the space needed to write. Many thanks to our incredible staff who operates on their own for a few weeks while I hole up in my office—you guys are incredible! A special thanks to Tim, who arrived back from sabbatical just in time for me to disappear, and then send him 140 pages of material to edit! Great to have you back, brother. You were missed in more ways than you know. Thanks also to our faithful Elders, who support me with time, prayer, encouragement, and much needed grace.

Thanks to Keith for the sweet cover design. Your artistic talent amazes me! And a huge thank you to Tim, John, Belinda, Kimberly and Wendy for the hectic, last-minute editing. Of all the study guides, this one created the biggest time crunch of all of them for you guys, and I appreciate your willingness to do what you could! Thank you for making me sound better than I actually do and for keeping my grammar from being an embarrassment to all.
As I’ve always tried to do, despite being mocked for it by Scott King, I want to thank those artists who have provided the soundtrack for this writing experience. Josh Garrels—I’m honestly continually amazed. With the amount of times my iPod says I’ve played your stuff, I should be sick of it, but I feel like I’ve only just started to dig in! Zach Winters, Florence + the Machine, Andrew Bird, Andrew Peterson (both the new album, which is great, and “Behold the Lamb,” which is hands down, by far, no contest the absolute best Christmas album ever recorded), Gillian Welch, Folk Angel, Brandi Carlisle, Joanna Newsom, and Matthew Perryman Jones, who is rapidly packing up the play count on the iPod as well. Without each of you and your brilliant work, this book still would have been written exactly as it is. But I would be sad.

And finally, my gracious and wonderful family. Up until this one, they seemed to be getting easier, but this one was tough on all of us. As I wrap this up, I’m finally ready for Christmas. Tia, Ethan, Josiah, and Micah, you are the great joys of my life. You each in your own way remind me of how wonderful, creative, and loving our God is. I pray that your service of Him will only be surpassed by your joy in Him. Amanda, you are more wonderful than you can realize. Thank you for being patient with my brokenness and my busyness. Despite my best efforts and planning, I can’t seem to get either to go away. Fifteen incredible years and counting… “As we grow old, may it be told that we never lost our flame. If love’s a fire, then our desire is to burn untamed.” By God’s grace.

The study of God’s Word will change us. May we be constantly becoming different people, and may we be like Him. (2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 3:2)

Brian Kannel
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