

Suggested Reading

This week you may wish to read the following passages from the Bible.

A Recommended Reading

Mark 6:6b - 8:21

B Read Carefully

Mark 6:30-44	Feeding of the 5,000
Mark 8:1-10	Feeding of the 4,000
Mark 8:14-21	The Yeast of the Pharisees
Mark 7:24-30	Jesus outside Galilee (Tyre)
Mark 7:31-37	Jesus outside Galilee (Sidon)

C Background Reading

Mark 6:30-44	Feeding of the 5,000
Exodus 16:12-35	Manna in the Desert
2 Kings 4:42-44	Elisha Feeds One Hundred
Ezekiel 34:12-16	God the Shepherd

Prayer

O God, who by the pages of both Testaments
Instruct and prepare us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery,
Grant that we may comprehend your mercy,
So that the gifts we receive from you this night
may confirm our hope of the gifts to come.
Through Christ our Lord Amen.
(From the Easter Vigil)

PFV v7 3/2025

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Henley on Thames



The rejection of Jesus.

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Mark 3:7 - 6:6a



The negative note on which the preceding section concluded, is developed further within this section of the Gospel. Previously we have identified three groups: *i*, the disciples, *ii*, the Crowd, *iii*, the Scribes and Pharisees. In this section of the Gospel, we may add a fourth group: the relatives of Jesus. Once more, we will be able evaluate the differing reactions of those who encounter Jesus. The lack of faith displayed by many of these groups is evident. This is most pronounced in Nazareth, where Jesus is amazed by their lack of faith. This is why we may entitle this handout *'The rejection of Jesus'*

We begin on a positive note: Jesus withdraws to Lake Galilee where there is an enthusiastic reception from the crowd. Mark emphasises the size of the crowd, as people converge from Galilee and the surrounding regions to hear Jesus and be healed. Jesus chooses the *'twelve'* from his disciples.

This is a significant moment in the Gospel story, because from this point onwards we can identify the group of disciples who later will be known as 'Apostles.' These twelve disciples echo the twelve tribes of Israel, God's first chosen people.

Chap.3 describes the negative response from Jesus' family and from the Scribes who come from Jerusalem. This new set of opponents raises a new charge against Jesus: he is possessed. This is the most serious charge made against Jesus. They can identify the *result* of Jesus' power: the defeat of Satan. However, they cannot understand its *source*: the power of God. Jesus' family seek to take charge of him, convinced that he is out of his mind! At *Mk 3:33* they are contrasted with his real (spiritual) relatives = all those who do God's will.

Within this section of the Gospel Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God by word and action. The parables of the kingdom comprise Chap.4 of Mark's Gospel, and the miracle stories Chap.5.

Jesus teaches the crowds in parables; but the disciples receive '*the secret of the kingdom.*' (*Mk 4:11*) They accompany Jesus on his travels, in the boat across the lake. They travel with Jesus to the Gentile side of the lake. We may understand these chapters as training them for their mission to the Gentiles. *The necessity of faith* is important. The stilling of the storm gives us an insight to the disciples' lack of faith. This scene reveals to us that Jesus can sleep in the boat (such is his complete confidence in God) while the experienced fishermen are in mortal terror. Jesus' rebuke of the storm and the resulting calm is an implicit statement of his divine power. His rebuke to the disciples is forceful. '*Have you still no faith?*' Their lack of faith is evident as they ask = '*who then is?*'

Knowledge of Jesus can be a disadvantage. The people of Nazareth reject Jesus because they believe they know who he is. This scene is a summary of some of the themes which have been developed so far: *i*, discipleship and faith, *ii*, Jesus as teacher and miracle worker, *iii*, the misunderstanding and rejection of Jesus.

Jesus travels to Nazareth and teaches in the synagogue. His audiences' astonishment does not lead to faith. Their knowledge of Jesus is ironic. If they really knew who he was they would believe. In turn, Jesus is amazed

The presence of the pigs indicates that the incident took place in non-Jewish territory, since pigs were unclean to Jews. The stampede and loss of the pigs may have been humorous to Jewish listeners, but the people were afraid of Jesus and implore him to leave the neighbourhood.

The man who had been possessed *begged* to be allowed to stay with him. However, Jesus sends him away to '*tell them all that the Lord in his mercy has done for you and what mercy he has done for you. So the man went off began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.*'

The vocation of this man is not to follow Jesus, but rather to be the one who will spread the message to the Gentiles. This he does faithfully, and now the people of the Decapolis region are 'amazed' at Jesus' actions. This man's mission is entirely different to that practised in Galilee. There is no secret here, in contrast to the family of the little girl who are ordered strictly not to let anyone know about it.

Next Week

Jesus and his disciples

Rejected by his own townspeople, Jesus concentrates on his disciples. Our growing understanding of the significance of the geography within Mark's Gospel will help. Note the importance of the two sides of the Sea of Galilee. In this section there are two accounts of the feeding of the multitudes. One is on the Gentile side of the lake, and the other is on the Jewish side. Compare these accounts. In this section of the Gospel Jesus travels far outside Galilee to Tyre and Sidon.

I would ask you to study the two accounts of the feeding of the multitudes. (*Mk 6:30 - 44, 8:1 - 10*) If you have time you could compare these accounts and also study the Old Testament background. If you prefer you could study the journey of Jesus outside Galilee. (*Mk 7:24 - 37*)

Can you answer the Jesus' questions in *Mk 8:19 - 21*? Has your examination of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes helped you to understand its significance? Does the examination of the Old Testament shed light upon it? What is your reaction to the severe questioning of the disciples? Do you identify with them?

at their lack of faith, which results in the fact that he could not work a miracle there. Their lack of faith disables him. His amazement reminds us that he expected these people to believe in him. Maybe these words from John's Gospel are appropriate here: *'He came to his own and his own people did not accept him.'* (Jn 1:11)

Despite the crowd's enthusiasm, Jesus is not understood by his disciples and is misunderstood or rejected by those who should have known him; his family. In the next section of the Gospel, we shall note Jesus' response as he travels beyond Galilee and spends more time with his disciples.

Mark Chapter Five.

A characteristic of Mark's Gospel, is that Jesus is very active. The miracles of Jesus are signs of the kingdom, perhaps the most dramatic way to teach. There are three miracles stories in this chapter. They are the Gerasene Demoniac; Jairus' Daughter and the Woman with a Haemorrhage.

A close examination of these miracle stories can help us to discover their usual structure. We can also compare Mark's account with Matthew's. By comparing these two passages we can note the common features in these stories as well as the important differences.

The Structure of a Miracle Story.

Miracles have a similar structure:

- **The Introduction:** which presents the scene
- **A Request for intervention:** which shows the faith of the person or demands faith from those around them
- **The Action of Jesus** the miracle
- **The Result** the cure
- **The Reaction of the Spectators** Fear, Astonishment

Comparison of the account of the Woman with a Haemorrhage in Mark Chapter 5 and Matthew Chapter 8.

Mark is commonly understood to be the shortest Gospel. It has only sixteen chapters in comparison to Luke's twenty-four chapters, and Matthew's twenty-eight chapters. Sometimes casual observers may make the mistake of believing that the passages in Mark will always be the shorter. In fact, they are often *longer* than their parallels elsewhere. Matthew and Luke are longer Gospels because they have more material: e.g., the Nativity Stories and the accounts of the Resurrection. The material they share with Mark is often summarised.

Chap.5 of Mark offers us one the clearest examples of the different styles of writing. Mark describes both miracles in great detail. The information he gives us allows us to imagine the scene. By stressing the power of the Demoniac or the persistence of the haemorrhage, Mark stresses the power of Jesus to cure.

The Gerasene Demoniac & the Woman with a Haemorrhage.

(See handout 2.1 – Mark Chap.5)

By comparing these two passages we can note the common features in these stories as well as the important differences. Both accounts are overleaf. The print in *Italics* indicates those features which are common to both stories. The print in **bold** indicates the important differences in both stories.

Firstly, we should consider the importance of Geography. In the Gospel of Mark there is a link between geography and theology. The eastern side of the lake is a Gentile area, the western side is Jewish. By going to the eastern side of the lake, Jesus and his disciples go to the Gentiles.

At the beginning of each account Jesus reaches the other side of the lake. When he reaches the country of the Gerasenes he is approached by a possessed man. Gerasa was 30 miles SE of the Sea of Galilee. This area was outside of the traditional boundaries of the land of Israel. In contrast when Jesus returns to the other (Jewish) side of the lake he is greeted by a large crowd; and particularly by one of the Synagogue officials. In each of the miracle stories the person at the centre of the story 'falls at the feet of Jesus and begs him earnestly'. (Mk 5:7; 5:10; 5:18; 5:22; 5:23; 5:33).