

# ***In Our Own Words***



***Christ Lutheran Church***  
*Route 27 & Davis Mill Road (2.5 miles north of Rt. 355)*  
*Germantown, MD*



## ***Lenten Devotional Booklet***

***2024***

### **St. Mark's Gospel**

For this Lenten Season we are looking at St. Mark's Gospel from which most of the Gospel Lessons are taken for 2024. This is Series B in our three-year Lectionary rotation. We share this Series along with a few other Protestant communions and the Roman Catholic Church. It means that you have the opportunity to discuss a weekly scripture passage with Christian friends who are not Lutheran. Try it sometime. Ask a Christian friend what Bible passages they had in their worship service for that week.

As you read the passage you have selected, I encourage you to read the whole chapter and to review the other three Gospels as they relate to your section. Also, I have given each selection a title. Please feel free to change it using one of your own that seems more appropriate.

The Apostle Peter is the primary source for Mark's writing. Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. (Col 4:10). He accompanied him on Paul's first missionary journey until Paul thought it better that he not continue. (Acts 15: 37-39) This caused a split in the missionary teams. Barnabas took Mark with him, and Paul continued on with Siias. Mark became familiar with Peter, the head of the Jerusalem Church. Thus St. Mark's Gospel reflects much of the life and ministry of Peter. It is also thought that Mark was the young man present when Jesus was arrested and had to flee. (Mark 14:51-13)

We call attention to the truth that these are all very real humans, with all of our human feelings, facing very real & strong and stressful situations. Yet these people had a very real and strong commitment to our Lord Jesus Chris.

Thank you for your service; and God's blessing as you look into His Holy Word.

**Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf**

### Preparing the Way

The separation of the Bible into Old and New Testaments is for our convenience. The Theology is continuous from Genesis to Revelation; indeed, there are cross-references between the two.

The Gospels are, of course, primarily about Jesus, but don't begin with Him. Jesus could have arrived with an army of horsemen, but He didn't. John the Baptist came first, wearing camels' hair and eating Locusts. Yuk.....

Rather than make a triumphal entry, Jesus accepted baptism from John. Jesus must have known where He was headed, as He began preaching immediately after John's arrest. Note: "arrest". Would you want to step into John's shoes?

Like many Christians, I believe that Jesus is coming back soon. But what is "soon" in God's eyes? It could be a thousand years. Our warning, from the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, is to not plan for a time of preparation, but to prepare now.

**Prayer: Dear Lord, since every day is a gift from you, let us not only be aware of that, but to show it to others. Amen.**

**Art Delagrance**

### John and Jesus

The Jews had long awaited a deliverer to come to them. They no doubt hoped to be delivered from Taxes and Oppression, their deliverer riding on mighty horse and leading an army. John was just the opposite. But, in those days anyone coming to town was an event. John did say another was coming who was mightier. And they had been warned in the Old Testament that a messenger would be coming.

Of course, Jesus did come, and was baptized by John. So far, so good....

But His message was a continuation of John's. Do not worry about the evil that surrounds you; first get rid of the evil that is in your own heart.

Not a pleasant message. It is easy to find someone who is worse than you and condemn them. But we are told to set a good example, and stick to it.

Not easy, Jesus did not lead an easy life; eventually He lost His life.

Death is generally not something we look forward to. But if you truly follow Jesus, it is the doorway to a better life.

**Prayer: Jesus, help me follow you to the end, which will then be a new beginning. Amen.**

**Art Delagrance**

Friday, February 16

Mark 1:9-13

### Temptation

I have known for many years that Jesus had spent forty days and nights in the wilderness without food or drink. Not until I randomly picked this topic did, I begin to think. What was Jesus wrestling with and his responses to the temptations?

**Number I** - Jesus being in the wilderness for forty days and nights without food or drink. One can only imagine the hunger and thirst deprivation, what really goes on when the human body is deprived.

There were voices (the Devil) saying to him) TURN THE STONES INTO BREAD TO SATISFY YOUR HUNGER!!! Jesus denied himself of material food and chose Spiritual Food of God.

**Number II** - The Devil asked Jesus to prove that he was the Messiah and that God really cared for him, in other words, for him to Misuse his POWER. People questioned his identity and authority throughout his life. This proof was asked of Jesus again and again and finally on the cross. Still his response was THY WILL BE DONE. Jesus endured many sufferings of mental and physical abuse but always trusted God the Father.

**Number III** - Jesus had no desire for personal gain nor political power. Jesus' devotion to God was unquestionable. Jesus put God and God's Kingdom first always. In **Luke 4:1-13**; Jesus successfully resisted each temptation by quoting the scripture after which the Devil departs until another opportune time. We all are tempted and have difficulties in our lives. I have come to learn working through my trials and tribulations brings me closer to God.

**Prayer; Dear God Thank you for all that you do for me, my family, friends and the world. Thank you for sending your son here to wash away our sins. AMEN**  
Carol Bartels

Saturday, February 17

Mark 1: 14-22

### “Jesus Begins His Galilean Ministry”

(Vs 14-15) Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **“Repent, and believe in the gospel.”**

Four Fishermen Called as Disciples, as Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. This is where He casts out an unclean spirit.

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, as you called your disciples to serve, help us to understand the calling that you have for us. Help me to serve my neighbor in whatever capacity you would have me do. I know that am not saved by my works, but through my faith in Christ Jesus. Help me to share Your Word with confidence as you taught confidently in the synagogues. I pray all these things in your Son's most precious name. Amen.**  
Chris Clarke

**Monday, February 19**

**Mark 1: 23-46**

**You Will Know Them by Their Fruits**

Early in Christ's ministry, he performed a series of exorcisms and healings to demonstrate his connection to the Almighty and to fulfill what had been prophesied. People were amazed and flocked to his door. So great was the demand that it conflicted with Jesus' need for contemplation. In the end, moved by compassion, Jesus cured a leper but ordered him to say nothing to anyone. The leper disobeyed this stern directive and Jesus had to avoid more needy crowds. From this passage we learn, while conducting his ministry, Jesus showed his connection to God the Father but attracted the people's unlimited needs and unwanted attention.

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, let us be ever grateful for the gifts that you have given us and use those gifts wisely in service to others.**

**Amen.**

**Mack Brooks**

**Tuesday, February 20**

**Mark 2: 1-12**

**Forgiveness of Sin**

I enjoy learning about ancient times and practices. In this story about Jesus' power to forgive sin, we read about something we typically don't recognize in modern times. Four men carry their paralyzed friend up onto a roof (these days it might be urgent care). Jesus is preaching inside the house that's surrounded by the crowd wanting to hear his message (and maybe hoping to see something spectacular).

The men cut a hole in the roof. How do they do it? Well after having to negotiate the crowd, the four men needed to get on the roof and then tie the man's bedsheets together with rope. After that, they cut through the roofing material which was probably wood, dirt/clay, and some grass or thatch. They lowered him down right next to Jesus.

These men went to a lot of trouble to help their friend and they risked humiliation as well. What if Jesus wouldn't heal the man because he was too busy with his teaching? Instead, Jesus responded with love and taught the lesson that forgiveness can be quickly given but faith is often needed to see that happen.

**Prayer: Jesus give us the faith we need to seek your forgiveness and to accept your gracious love for we need your help and want to live well despite our sins. Amen.**

**Doug Bollman**

Wednesday, February 21

Mark 2: 18-Mark 3:6

### Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” Healing on the Sabbath. In Mark 3, Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So, they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. He said to the man who had the withered hand, “Step forward.” Then He said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they kept silent. He looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. The Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

From Jessica Clarke:

In this passage, Jesus shows us that He is the ultimate authority and that He is replacing the law. Jesus demonstrates that regardless of the time or location, that we should seek to help those in need. This was the start of the Pharisees and Herodians plotting against Him. Even though Jesus knew He would end up on the cross, He chose to continue with His ministry anyways.

**Prayer: Let us help our neighbor and we pray that no matter the circumstance that we would always stand up and defend the faith. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.**

**Jessica Clarke**

Thursday, February 22

Mark 3: 13-35

### Called of God

This Gospel reading in Mark 3 is a writing about God’s mission and the names of his choosing. There is question from those of the pharisees, who were accusing Jesus of working for Satan, and Jesus assuring them that a house divided against itself must fall. Jesus was busy choosing his disciples and other helpers, who all assisted in growing the ministry. He chose helpers from all aspects of life; some of which was not even stated exactly what they did for a living.

I can visualize anyone today, who has decided to begin a new business, with good intentions of having great assets and having a product that everyone would be excited to buy and tell others. Naturally, after seeing excitement for a good product, one seeks out good personnel to assist in company productivity.

Jesus has a wonderful vision for his ministry and chooses these ones, who will follow him to the very end. I can see that, with a mission to save the world from their sins, Jesus had to have great difficulty in choosing loved ones, who were going to be attacked constantly, because of their mission. However, these disciples knew that they were helping the “Way and the Truth and the Life”. The very Messiah that was prophesied to come and they did not hesitate; even Matthew, who was a dreaded tax collector.

These were the “called of God “and were destined to serve the very Son Of God, yet the world made Martyrs of them all. Can you see ourselves as being someday chastised by the world of unbelievers in power around us?

**Prayer: Thank you, Holy Father, for the Mission, you have given us and give us strength to continue serving you. Amen**

**Bruce Gladhill**

Friday, February 23

Mark 4: 1:34

### Be Like the Good Seed

In this Bible lesson, Jesus talked about when the farmer planted the seeds. Some fell in the dirt and the sun burned it and it died. Some seeds fell in the rocky ground. They grew for a short time and then died. Other seeds fell in good soil, and grew big and strong.

The people that live with God are the good people and follow what Jesus says. The other people don't follow what Jesus says. They only care about themselves.

We need to be like the seed that grew and grew and grew. We need to follow Jesus and listen and do what He says.

**Prayer: Dear Jesus, Please help us to be like the good seed and not like the seed that didn't grow. We want to be like You and follow You. We want to be good. In Your name we pray. Amen.**

**Will Stapf**

Saturday, February 24

Mark 5:21- Mark 6:6

### Miracles

In today's reading, Jesus was doing miracles.

A lady who was sick for a long-time touched Jesus' clothes. Jesus felt power going out of Him and asked who touched Him. The lady was scared, but she explained everything to Jesus. He was kind and told her she was healed.

Jesus also healed a little girl who was sick, but her Dad believed that Jesus could heal her, and He did.

Jesus can still do miracles for us today. We just have to pray and talk to Him.

**Dear Jesus, Thank you for helping us when we are sick and always wanting to take care of us. In Your name we pray. Amen.**

**Jazz Stapf**

Monday, February 26

Mark 6:7-13

### Tell Others About Jesus

Today we read that Jesus called His disciples over and gave them a job to preach to the people in all the towns. They were not supposed to take a lot of things with them, like money or extra clothes. He told them to go into a town and find a house to stay in and tell people about Jesus.

The disciples went out and preached that the people should stop sinning. They went from town-to-town preaching and healing people.

We need to show Jesus' love by helping people if they are hurt, and telling them about Jesus. We can share that Jesus wants us to love each other and live for Him and not sin.

**Prayer: Dear Jesus, Please help us to tell others about You by our words and our actions. In Your name we pray. Amen. Remi Stapf**

Tuesday, February 27

Mark 6: 45-46

### Prayer was Jesus Strength

Mark 6: 45-46 are the verses just after Jesus fed the 5000 men, plus women and children with the five loaves and 2 fish. The thing I noticed first about these two verses was the word "Immediately"! Jesus gave instructions to his disciples first and took charge of dispersing the crowd himself and then separated himself on the mountainside to pray. To me that means Jesus was obedient to the will and plan of his Father. It also means that Jesus was in close/constant communication with his Father's will and plan. Jesus' desire was to know the will and plan of his Father and to obey it.

In John 6: 14-15, John recounts the same circumstances and explains further that the crowd thought he was a Prophet and wanted to make him their 'king'. It was most likely due to the miracle of the loaves and fishes (earthly provisions) and miracles of healing that spurred on their enthusiasm to make him their king. Their idea of his becoming their king was premature (not God's perfect timing) and dictated their motives (earthly provisions and miracles). Jesus did not get distracted or confused by all that was going on because his trust was in his Father and doing His will. Fellowship with God! Trust! Obey! Pray!

**Prayer: Father, may I be obedient to your will and seek your plans for my life. I want to always be in communication with you to know your will. Let me not be distracted by circumstances or overcome with doubt. Holy Spirit guide me Always! Amen.**

Carolyn Shriver

Wednesday, February 28

Mark 6: 47 -52

### We Are Slow To Learn

The interpretation of this scripture is sometimes very confusing and difficult, because it does question everyone's faith. We say to ourselves, how could these disciples even question the fact that their messiah was able to walk out to them on water. Yes, I do know that it was dark and stormy, and windy, but we say to ourselves " were they all so slow to learn the power of their Lord, after a short time earlier, he miraculously fed 5000 men, with a few loaves and fishes. A tremendous miracle! I constantly try to put myself into the boat with them and wonder if I would be scared to death of a ghost walking on the stormy lake! My answer is yes, of course!

There was an entirely different setting and in all the confusion of a storm, I would be just as slow to believe. These were just regular guys, who were not in the habit of actually seeing someone walking on water in a bad storm. But Jesus wanted them to know, that if they believed in God, then they could expect miracles and truly believe.

Jesus' mission of saving the world would include healing the sick, raising the dead, and also living with his followers in a normal fashion. Let us try to learn in our journey, that we would believe in him so much, that we would always expect a miracle, and be quick to learn just who he is!

**Prayer: Father, please help us to gain an abundant trust in you and become greater believers. Amen**                      **Bruce Gladhill**

Thursday, February 29

Mark 7: 1-23

### Keep Your Heart Clean

Today we read that Jesus' disciples were eating without washing their hands. The other teachers said they had to wash their hands before they eat.

Jesus said you are unclean if you do bad things. What is in your heart makes you clean or dirty.

**Prayer: Dear Jesus, Thank you for teaching us to do good things. Help our hearts to not be dirty. In Your name we pray. Amen.**

**Lani Stapf**



Friday, March 1

Mark 7: 24-30

**Faith in Unexpected Places**

When Jesus was in the vicinity of Tyre, a Syrophenician woman approached Him begging Him to heal her daughter of an evil spirit. In the Matthew 15 account Jesus did not answer the woman immediately, but she kept asking anyway. Was Jesus not expecting such request from a non-Jew?

Finally, Jesus answered her: "First let the children eat all they want for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." Jesus was telling her that he come first to the children (the Jews) with the gospel, not the dogs (the Gentiles).

But the woman answered "Yes Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Notice she addresses him "Lord". What had she heard or seen of Jesus? Whatever it was, she had faith to believe Jesus could heal her daughter, and He did. Faith where you do not expect it.

I give thanks and praise that God the Father loved everyone so much that he willingly sent his only Son, Jesus, not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. We all now have the opportunity to be in God's family, even if it is crumbs!

**Prayer: Heavenly Father; we thank you every day that you invite us to your table. Amen,**

**Janice Delagrange**

Saturday, March 2

Mark 8:27-34

**But who do you say I am?**

As Jesus and his disciples embark on their journey South to Jerusalem in the northern city of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks them what the people are saying about him. Their response indicates that the people are aware of his ministry and healing miracles and are speculating about his status as a great prophet. Jesus then asks the disciples who they say he is. When Peter answers that Jesus is the Messiah, or Christ, Jesus warns them not to tell people this. Jesus may be warning the disciples not to draw any additional attention to their ministry, knowing that the "powers that be" will be threatened by the power over the people he draws. When Jesus goes on to explain the suffering and rejection by those in power that he will endure, he is both reinforcing this idea, but also letting them know that he is not interested in gaining political power or any status of royalty among the existing power structures. He is letting the disciples know that they are on a spiritual mission that will not bring them great earthly status or wealth among men but are challenging the existing world order to bring about a spiritual revolution. Jesus is not returning to Jerusalem to rule over men or liberate them from the Roman empire. He wants to make sure that they know what they are getting into and are not following him for the wrong reasons. When Peter is shocked by what Jesus is saying, Jesus calls Peter out on this, knowing he is speaking from his ego. Jesus' ministry will threaten the existing powers and those who follow him must be willing to give up egotistic desires and only follow the Christ consciousness of unconditional love for All in alignment with the Word of God for the liberation of their souls from the fetters of earthly desires.

**Prayer:** "I am changing my incarnation to vibrate in alignment with the Creator in all ways, who will support me in bringing forth this frequency and form in consciousness as an aspect of the Creator fully realized, embodied in light." Amen. **Brian Gray**

Monday, March 4

Mark 8: 35-38

### Losing One's Life for Jesus

This passage tells me that if you want to have a good life, you must make sacrifices. For example, if you make a sacrifice to go to a movie theater, it's not really going to mean much to the Lord. but if you are doing it for Jesus, God our lord, or the Holy spirit you are doing it for the better good, and proves that you are worthy to go to heaven.

**Prayer: Thank you, God, for watching over me. Amen.**

**Stephen R Gray**

Tuesday, March 5

Mark 9: 1-8

### The Transfiguration

Today's reading reminds me of Jesus Baptism. His Baptism is covered in Matthew 3: 13-17, Mark 1: 9-11, Luke 3: 21-22, and hinted at in John 1: 29-34. The transfiguration is recorded here in Mark 9: 2-8, Matthew 17: 1-8, Luke 9: 28-36, and 2 Peter 1; 16-18.

To me the message is loud and clear: At Jesus Baptism we have the descending dove and the voice of God proclaiming, **"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am I am well pleased."** As recorded by eye witnesses; and In today's text, on the transfiguration of Jesus. Peter, James and John were eye witness to seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah, a cloud envelops them and in Mark 9:7 a voice from the cloud says, **"This is my Son whom I love. Listen to Him."** Then they no longer saw Moses or Elijah just Jesus Transfigured.

We can rest assured from the Scriptures and Gospels that Christ Jesus is the Son of God and with the Holy Spirit, they are one with God the Father.

**Prayer: Father Almighty, thank you for the Peace and Grace you bestow upon us through your Son, our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**Joe Flesch**

Wednesday, March 6

Mark 9:17-29

### Lord, Help my Unbelief

A father was seeking healing for his possessed son comes to Jesus. Jesus tells him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes". The man then cries out, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

In this verse, the man is grappling with a mix of belief and doubt. On one hand, he expresses his belief in Jesus' ability to help his possessed son, saying, "Lord, I believe". On the other hand, he acknowledges the presence of doubt or unbelief in his heart and humbly asks for assistance, saying, "help my unbelief!"

This statement resonates with me because it's a sincere plea for spiritual strength. It's natural to struggle with doubts and at the same time have trust in God's word. One can confront uncertainties and questions in their faith while seeking God's assistance and strength. It reflects a humble and honest posture before God,

As human beings, we don't see the big picture. As we grow in Christ, understanding comes from questioning. God's will for me doesn't come all at once but it unfolds a little at a time.

**Prayer: Gracious God, you sent your son to live among us to teach us about your love and sacrifice himself for the redemption of our sins. You know our limitations as human beings and provide comfort through your divine love. Please continue to guide us closer to your great glory, in the name of Jesus. Amen.**

Jane Simcox

Thursday, March 7

Mark 10:1-12

### Marriage and Divorce

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him. And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so, then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate."

In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So, He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

**Prayer: Gracious Lord Jesus, as You have said, "two become one flesh," I pray that You would strengthen all marriages and families. Help husbands and wives to understand the bond you forged between them is unbreakable when they turn their heart to You. Show kindness also to the unmarried and assure them of the holiness of their place in life, that they would be freed from anxiety and attend to holiness in body and spirit, undividedly devoted to You. We pray for all of these things in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Chris Clarke

Friday, March 8

Mark 10: 17-31

### The Power of Possessions

From the very beginning, God asked his people Israel, to give the very first 10% of their first fruits to the Lord their God. They were his people and he was protecting them, because he had such great love for them. More love than we could ever have for each other. I have never been able to understand that kind of love until I learned my Father giving his only son to die, by taking all of our sins upon himself. This horrible agony upon him and he being perfect in his life and experiencing this torture anyway for our personal sins.

I actually felt sorry for the wealthy young man, who was willing to live such a good life and then get so disappointed by Jesus himself, for Jesus knew his personal desire to cleave to his wealth. It had slowly become his very life and stood in the way of putting God first.

It is so very hard for all of us to give the first 10% of our living to God and try to figure out how to pay everything else in our lives. How to pay for the 3 or 4 kids and all their clothing and food. To drive a car that's a little less fancy or furniture that may be pretty old. But just wait and see the miracle that God gives to you, because you gave so much up for him. He will love you for it and bless you greatly in some special unexpected way. All blessings to the Lord, who is the giver of all life.

**Prayer: We just praise you Lord, for all your gifts, and help us to live by giving you our first fruits. Amen. Bruce Gladhill**

Saturday, March 9

Mark 10:35-45

### Who is the Greatest

This passage reveals who we are and who Jesus is. The disciples were followers of Jesus, and in that day to be a disciple meant traveling with your teacher and getting new disciples. In our human condition, we can't just leave it at that. There are disciples and there are real disciples, right? James and John wanted to be elevated above the others and they might think it's for a good reason. They followed him wherever he went. Was it wrong for them to want some benefits?

Jesus knows how to answer them without offending them. Instead, he teaches them a few things. First it is not up to him who sits on the father's right hand and left. The king's trusted advisors sat nearest to him. God as King decides who will be honored. Jesus wouldn't try to be a top-down decision-maker. Jesus gives submission to his Father.

Jesus then asks a strange question. "Would you be willing to drink the cup (of suffering) that Jesus must take?". The disciples quickly answer "Yes, they would take the cup". The disciples did not truly understand what they were getting themselves into. But Jesus then predicts that they will indeed take the cup of suffering. It is so much like us to jump into something to win the approval of others whether for our teachers or our friends.

Jesus says the only way to get ahead is instead through serving others. A quick shortcut phrase for this might be the "first" must become the "last". If we want to succeed, we have to be willing to give up something and serve one another, as a servant does for his master. In this case, we serve Jesus. **Prayer: Father, help us to see that true greatness does not come by exercising authority over others, but by our willingness to help one another by giving our time, the peace we receive from Jesus, and our love. Lord, enable us to do this service on your behalf and through Your power, for we are weak. Amen. Doug Bollman**

March 11, 2024

Mark 11:15-18

### Misuse of Sacred Things

In Mark 11:15-18, This was the final week before Jesus' crucifixion and as Jesus entered the temple court, He was distraught that the money changers were taking the traveler's money to exchange it into temple currency and cheating them. And that the animals were horribly overpriced. Jesus was furious and began driving out those that were exchanging the currency and those selling the animals. He said, "is it not written: My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?"

Growing up on a dairy farm as the youngest of six children, money was not a surplus in our family. My mother and father would often tell us money can't make you happy. HMMM – but when you wanted a new dress or a night out with friends, that didn't seem very comforting. But what was comforting was the happy heart that I felt when my folks would provide food and other staples to help someone in need. They were right.

When we first became members of Christ Lutheran, the church hosted an open house Christmas Party. We had a violinist that performed and we had handouts of our church history and the history of our beautiful sanctuary followed by refreshments. Discussion was held about whether we should charge an admission price. Pastor Stapf resolved the issue by essentially quoting the essence of Mark 11: 15-17. WOW! I was so impressed and knew that the goodness of God's mercy should be shared with all who enter our church. Whenever we had a community picnic, Sweetest Day Dinner and Dance, or whatever event there was never a charge. I am grateful for his leadership and our welcoming of all.

**Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, May I always remember that putting a large monetary gift in the offering plate is not the essence of genuine worship. The question is whether I offer you my heart in repentance and faith. Money can't buy that! Amen.**

Jeane Flesch

Tuesday, March 12

Mark 12:1-12

### What do you have that you have not been given?

Jesus' parable in Mark 12 tells of a landowner who planted a very fine vineyard, doing all that was necessary for it to produce a good crop of wine grapes. He then leased it out to vinedressers expecting to receive an annual allotment of its fruit.

Telling the parable to the Jewish priests and elders He was speaking of Israel's history and how they, in their pride of position and desire for personal status, had closed themselves off to God's truth. Who is this unlearned rural carpenter who has been causing such a stir? What right does he have to teach us? Pride in our own importance and arrogance about our own understanding closes us off from God's truth. This is why Jesus so often highlighted the need for humility, prayer, and being quiet before God.

We have all been given gifts of grace and various abilities by our heavenly Father. He is the owner and source of them all. He asks us to use them for good and to His glory. We can acknowledge and give thanks for a job well done, but it is our gracious Lord who receives the return to His glory.

**Prayer: Father, let my life be a return to your glory. Amen.**

**Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf**

Wednesday, March 13

Mark 12:18-27

### The Resurrection of the Dead

The divine Sonship of Jesus Christ provides through His atoning sacrifice that:

- All who lived on Earth will be resurrected from the dead.
- All who lived on Earth may gain eternal life, with God, through baptism and repentance of their sins.

The point of the Sadducees in this scripture suggests that resurrection cannot be possible because if it were, a woman might end up with seven husbands in the next life. The Sadducees would rather deny the Resurrection than countenance the possibility of “polyandry” (multiple husbands). This story is not solely a dispute about this one unusual case. To the extent that the Sadducees (or Mark’s audience) understood that Jesus would die and be resurrected, it is important for Jesus to be able to defend the idea of resurrection; otherwise, his entire ministry is undermined.

The obvious way out of the Sadducees’ trap is for Jesus to say that there are no marriages in heaven; the fact that the Sadducees do not consider this a possibility (and thus think that their question proves that there can be no resurrection) suggests that the Sadducees assumed that Jesus would believe in marriage after death so strongly that he would be more likely to concede the Resurrection than post mortal marriage. In other words, this trap question is a testament to the strength of Jesus’ (and the Sadducees’) belief in marriage after death.

**Prayer: Pray that during Lent, each of us can use the time to focus our attention and actions on the life of Jesus Christ and his goodness.**  
**Christopher J Mathews**

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Mark 12:28-34

### To Love God and Neighbor

Jesus has an interaction with a scribe who asked Him what the most important commandment in the Old Testament was. Jesus responded by telling him that the most important commandments was to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and the second is to Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

These two commandments just about say it all! One naturally flows out of the other. Image a world where everybody lives by these two simple and universal commandments. In the context of Jesus' time, the scribes were respected authorities on Hebrew law and writings. Their expertise lay in adhering strictly to the letter of the law, often missing the spiritual depth behind it.

The scribe, comprehending the wisdom of Jesus' response, agrees with the importance of loving God and loving one's neighbor. Jesus affirms, “You are not far from the kingdom of God,” suggesting that understanding alone is not enough; one must also follow the path of Jesus to enter the kingdom of God.

**Prayer: Gracious God, I thank you for your boundless love and the guidance of your Son, Jesus Christ. I pray for the strength to embody the two greatest commandments—loving you and loving my neighbor. Guide me to love you with all my heart, mind, soul and strength. Help me seek to love my neighbor as myself, open my eyes to the needs and concerns of those around me. I offer this prayer in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Jane Simcox**

Friday, March 15

Mark 12: 38-44

### The Greater Offering

The passage of the widow's offering is my favorite passage, as I've often held myself to this code of offering in as many areas of life possible! I have caught myself thinking and saying similar things to others as Jesus says to his disciples when observing those who parade the idea of offering and charity for show rather than for genuine sincerity. Jesus' main and perhaps one true with humanity is the idea of hypocrisy. This here applies to the gaudy lawmakers and priests obtaining offerings. Furthermore, this passage calls out those of nobility offering large amounts, at no detriment to them, with the intent for show and glory of themselves, rather than for the true, honest, beautiful purpose of giving. In this sense, when a person serves their own image glorification, they are serving a false god, which is in fact a cardinal sin. This concept is brought up throughout various Jesus' teachings, such as Matthew 6:1-4 when describing giving to the needy, the world is not a stage (6:2- **"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men."**) Jesus even explains those with these intentions will be punished severely even though it "appears" they are performing a good, charitable, deed. When offering for show, it isn't real, especially when the seemingly exorbitant offerings are made from the hard work and sweat of others rather than themselves; instead from those such as the widow- having nothing, who is ready to offer all in commitment of Christ Jesus. The widow reminds us of our humility, to remember what the true purpose of giving is all about!

**Prayer: Heavenly Father thank you for constantly reminding us in your written word that you are all there really is in this life, and why it always matters, for the sake of our souls. AMEN.**

Ashley Gray

Saturday, March 16

Mark 13:1-2

### The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

"As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

What in the world does this passage mean to me? It is certainly clear to me that Jesus was not as impressed as the others in this passage with regard to the beauty and regality of the stone structures of the Temple. Why? I believe it is because He already knew that God was sovereign and would at some point destroy all of it, as if it were nothing. One whisper from our Father and it would disappear! Jesus knew that man needed to recognize the wonder and power not only of what God could make, but what He would destroy in order to gain sinful man's attention and reverence. The magnificence of the temple was not as important as the re-connection of man with God through the blood of God's own son Jesus. Beauty to God was creating a means for us to be forgiven through the sacrifice of Jesus, not through the impressiveness of stone buildings! Jesus always seems to find a rather subtle way of reminding us what we really need: not more things, but healing grace through the offering of His son.

I do know there are discussion and some disagreement over the meaning of Mark 13: 1-2 but I believe it is just one more example of how our Lord hints, reminds, or suggests the lessons we need to learn. We do not need to naively wonder at things like beautiful monuments and be humbled by the knowledge that God created a fantastic way to provide an appropriate sacrifice for our sins so that we can be One with our Father God.

**Prayer: Generous Father, we thank you that your Word foreshadows and reminds us frequently of your great love for us! In Jesus name, Amen.**

Sue Geiger

Monday, March 18

Mark 13: 3-8

### Many will come in My Name

Mark 13 (and Matthew 24) are titled "Signs of the End of the Age" (before the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ).

We are warned by Jesus that there will be those who try to deceive us from believing in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no doubt this is happening. Look at the concessions that some churches are making.

During this time there will also be wars and rumors of war. There will be famines and earthquakes. In Matthew 24: 7 the King James translation reads "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and contagious or infectious epidemic disease that virulent and devastating. It also means "pandemic." Coronavirus!!

Think about the wars in Ukraine and Israel. There are also indications there will be food shortages.

All these things are signs. We do not know the hour so we be alert, focused, and prepared to stand up for our faith until Jesus' second coming. It could be today, next month 100 years or more. I believe we should:

- Read the Bible, as it is the true word of God.
- Attend church, and fellowship with other Christians.
- When possible, tell others about our faith
- Pray always.
- Place our hope, faith, and trust in Jesus
- Stand up for what we believe.

**Prayer: Father God, we pray you give us the wisdom to recognize false prophets, teachers, and other signs to help to remain faithful to your word. Amen**

Janice Delagrange

Tuesday, March 19

Mark 13: 9-13

### Not a Popular Message

The overall title to this section speaks of the signs of the times and the end of the age. We are always cautioned not to set dates on our Lord's return, but to watch, to be aware of events, and to long for Jesus' coming.

This text from St. Mark speaks of Christian persecution at the end of the age, and also the truth that the Gospel has been preached throughout the world. Both of these we see in our day. Verse 13 ends with an ominous statement. **"You will be hated by all for my name's sake."** But above all in these "last days", however long they may be, we are told not to fear and to trust God, the Holy Spirit, to guide us in all we are called to say and do. In this we have His promise, **"he who endures to the end shall be saved."**

**Prayer: Thank you blessed Lord Jesus for the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit. Guide me so that I will endure and bring honor to your holy Name. Amen.**

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf



Monday, March 20

Mark 13: 14-19

### Foretold by the prophets

There are plenty of times in our lives where the reality of this world is put into perspective. When Jesus mentioned about the days of trouble, he spoke through his prophets to remind those when he was on earth that while times of hardship come, they too will pass away. What remains is our faith in the coming of the Messiah. This passage also shows why it is important to lean on what Jesus said, and not be swayed by those who claim to understand better. In these times, there may be fear around War, as well as the possible end of the World. Jesus has assured those who trust in him that they have everything they need to be assured that even in times of distress and desolation, our life is yet but a breath on this earth. Jesus' promises of life with him after death, as foretold by the prophets, as well as himself, will be what we all completely long for in the end.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your promise that even in hardship, we have the hope that one day, we will be reunited with you. All pain, suffering, and isolation will be gone. Thank you for your promises that we can cling to in times of hardship. Amen.**

**Jeremy Depp**

March 21, 2024

Mark 13:20-23

### Pray for the Shortening of Days

Have you ever had one of "those" days? A day when everything just seems to go wrong; best laid plans interrupted or thwarted by more urgent pressing issues, family members and friends are irritable and/or irritating and so are you. Yep, nothing seems to go right and you can't wait until you can get into bed and go to sleep.

In these verses, Mark tells us that the Lord has shortened "those" days for the sake of the "elect." Am I one of the "elect," are you? The "elect" is the term used for the Israelites and the term early Christians used to refer to themselves. We are Baptized Children of God and Blessed with The Holy Spirit. Jesus died for us and we are His. We surely have been blessed and have the confidence that we qualify.

But that doesn't change what is going on in our world. Oh, my goodness, do we have false prophets and fake messiahs? Yep, we surely do. They are in abundance and make decisions that truly astound the Bible believing Christian. We see the works of the devil in all his finest deviousness.

As a child, my mother would sing hymns as a comfort, joy, and consolation. I do the same. One of the hymns is:

#### ***"Precious Lord, Take My Hand"***

*Precious Lord, take my hand,  
Lead me on, let me stand,  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
Through the storm, through the night,  
Lead me on to the light.  
Take my hand, precious Lord,  
Lead me home.*

**Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, May my hymn call always upon you for guidance and strength through difficult time. You are my Savior and Lord! Thank you. Amen.**

**Jeane Flesch**

Friday, March 22

Mark 13:24-27

### Christ Will Come In Glory

In Mark 13, Jesus depicts what people will experience during the end of times on Earth, however, apocalyptic description of our planet is not the only means of which Jesus illustrates in Mark 13:24: **“The Sun will be darkened, and the Moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”** What Jesus is really describing here is a dark night of the Soul on all accounts. Even Jesus experiences this upon his crucifixion when he cries out in Mark 15:34 **“Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani?”** (Aramaic for: Why Has't thou forsaken thee?) One can view this as an in-depth description of what he must have been experiencing on the cross during his final breaths, as his body came upon the end of times; feeling immense disconnect from the Father in these moments.

Clinically speaking, (24) is describing the withdrawal process from chemical dependency where toxins begin flushing from the heavenly bodies of Mind-Body-Soul. Other examples include renovating a property with water damage, or losing the partner of your life suddenly after decades causing way to extensive grief and despair. In the throes of transition it is dark, bleak...yet as the detox wains, the new plumbing is sealed, and time has passed. (27) **“He will...gather his elect from the four winds** (Head to toe, limb to limb, North-South-East-West) **from the ends of the Earth to the ends of the Heavens.”**

Bottom line: God is Everywhere, throughout everything, within everyone. So, fear not! Bring your worry to him always and this shall be thy salvation that washes the waters of thy soul pure in God's love, giving birth to peace. For He is the ubiquity to erase all iniquity, to the dawn of new, from the days of antiquity.

**Prayer: Matthew 6:9-13 “Heavenly Father, Your Kingdom come, your Will be done, in Heaven above as on Earth below. Forgive us our debts from within as we forgive our debtors throughout, so that we are not led unto temptation, and hence delivered from the evil one” Amen.**

Ashley Gray

Saturday March 23

Mark 13: 28-37

### Keep on the Alert

This passage tells of Jesus' return.

One could say that Jesus means that the world is coming to an end, or one could say that it is the ending of one's life. I think it is both.

If you live in an area like Japan where they are known to have Tsunamis, then you could say, their world as they know it, comes to an end. You can say the same about forest fires on the west coast, hurricanes in the southeast, volcanos in Hawaii they are all natural disasters with warnings. One could say it is just your time to go back to God with or without warnings.

In any case in this world, we now live in gives us choices, to put emphasis on the now pleasures, or keep our hearts striving for our eternal home with Jesus and God.

**Prayer: Thank you, God, for allowing us to be in your world and see the beauty you have surrounded us with. Thank you for your GRACE. Amen.**

Carol Bartels

**A Beautiful Gift**

This is one of the most beautiful stories about a woman’s love and gratitude for Jesus. She showed her love by anointing his body with a very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. WOW! So just to put the “expensive perfume” into some perspective, Nard is made from a plant that grows in the Himalayas and is used as ointment or perfume. The cost of the ointment was worth about 300 denarii, about \$54,509 in U.S. dollars.

The disciples where not only shocked by the cost of the ointment she was using, but of the amount that she was using. So, they criticized her harshly, Jesus told them to leave her alone. That what she was doing was going to be remembered throughout the world in memory of her.

So, it doesn’t matter if it was a woman named Mary of Bethany or a woman named

Mary Magdalene or if Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene are the same person. John tells us the name but Mark does not.

Historians suggest that it was to protect the identity because Mary Magdalene was a prostitute – sinner. She owed her very life to Jesus because she was the woman who was possessed by seven devils and Jesus cast those devils out of her. She was a sinner in whom grace had proven its power. To me, it is pure gratitude.

Well, this is Lent. We are in a period of self-reflection and repentance. So, what will we do for the very person who gave His life for us.

Just as Mary, He saved us from our sins and filled us with His grace. What will you do for Him?

**Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, Humbly, we ask you to guide us as we choose what beautiful gift, we will offer to show our love and gratitude. Amen.**

Jeane Flesch

**Betrayal**

Just as Jesus is the Son of Man, Jesus’ disciples are as his own children, pupils, brothers, and perspectives. When a child is born, they are often a combination of these 12 perspectives and legacy teachings of Christ, as are all Christians. A parent can never be too sure exactly where in these perspectives their child will fall, however, we can always count on Mark 14:10-11 to remind us that all children, brothers, students are capable of uprooting- destruction and betrayal. Here you see Judas Iscariot, someone who loved Jesus very dearly, and reciprocally, Jesus’ love for Judas in return. As a parent, teacher, and brother, Jesus could see the pressure forming from the disrupt he was causing amongst the wicked. He could already see beforehand that one of his own would betray him in the process. Love takes many forms, and we are but weak humans, capable of love, yet often struggle to portray it because of our sin. Jesus teaches us through the Lord’s Supper passage to be prepared that your own children are capable of betrayal, as we are capable of betrayal as God’s children. This does not mean we don’t also love at the same time; this does not mean we are unworthy of God’s AGAPE LOVE. In this sense Jesus is teaching us awareness of what love really is.... EVEN when betrayed by your own beloved.

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, I thank thee for the wisdom and guidance to carry me through in understanding the hurtful actions of others as I also learn the hurtful actions I carry out as a child of God. Thank you for providing us with the understanding of awareness and choice that we may forge a path to righteousness in your name. AMEN. Ashley Gray**

**One Of You Will Betray Me**

These are harsh words spoken by Jesus, and difficult for us to imagine. As we know, it is Judas Iscariot, one of the original twelve disciples, who betrays the Christ. But before we point our finger at Judas, let's not forget that our sins, no matter what they may be, are just as condemning as those of this "Benedict Arnold" of disciples. Are we not turning from Christ every time we fall into sin? Do we not betray Jesus when we stumble in our iniquity? Yet, in spite of this betrayal our Lord institutes that very same evening what we know as the Lord's Supper. Think about it, Jesus would soon face the cross, and with it all the Father's wrath poured out upon Him there ...for such was required of the sin-bearer of the world. Yet in the midst of what He would soon face, Jesus gives His disciples, His Church, the most precious of all gifts...His holy Supper.

Holy Communion is at the heart of our Christian faith and life. But it was brought forth in the shadow of this most egregious betrayal by a disciple and a ruthless and brutal murder of the Lamb of God. But the institution of the Eucharist shows the heart of Christ and His desire to protect and keep His own in the one true faith, even as His sufferings and death loomed near. For Holy Communion strengthens our faith, and as we receive this Sacrament, we receive forgiveness of our sins. The Lord's Supper then, is a means by which Christ preserves you unto life eternal.

**Prayer: So, during this Lenten season, may we be reminded evermore of Christ's grace and mercy, that in Him we can and are forgiven of even the worst of the sins in our lives. Through repentance and our contrition, we are welcomed to the Table of our King each and every time, without any hesitancy on His part, and receive God's gift of life. For this Table is the place where the "ever-present-God" is "present-for-us" – present for you - now and forevermore. Amen.**

**The Reverend Dean Stoner**

**Embracing Grace in Weakness**

In the hallowed garden of Gethsemane, Jesus utters words that resonate through the ages, words that echo the vulnerability of our shared humanity: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38 ESV). On the Lenten journey, these words become a guiding light, illuminating the path of self-examination, confession, repentance, and trust.

Confessing and acknowledging our weaknesses during Lent is not only an admission of failure but a courageous step towards grace. In the shadows of Gethsemane, we confront our limitations, recognizing that our strength alone is totally insufficient. The essence of Lent lies in the paradox of a willing contrite spirit housed within a weak clay vessel.

This season beckons us to watch and pray, not out of fear, but out of a deep trust in the transformative power of God's grace. The invitation is not to strive for self-sufficiency but to surrender and lay our sins at the feet of the One who understands both the yearning of our spirits and the fragility of our flesh.

As we immerse ourselves in prayer during Lent, we trust that our Holy God will overshadow our weakness with His power. The Lenten journey becomes a sacred partnership between our willingness and God's unwavering grace.

In the shadowy stillness of Gethsemane, we find solace knowing that Jesus, too, faced the tension between spirit and flesh and prevailed in our stead. As we heed His call to vigilance, may our Lenten journey lead us to a deeper reliance and trust on God's sustaining grace. In confessing our weakness, we discover the strength that carries us from the shadows of Lent to the radiant dawn of Easter, where the victory over weakness is celebrated in the resurrection. Amen.

**We pray: Faithful High Priest, Christ Jesus, intercede for us at Your Father's throne, that despite our weak flesh, He will pardon and bless us for Your sake. Amen. Presiding Pr Cary Larson**

**Good Friday, March 29**

**Mark 15: 22-39**

**Crucified to Give us Life**

Jesus is now brought to the place of the Skull and Crucified. We know this story. The Jewish religious leaders have demanded His execution by the Roman overlords, because He threatened their position in society. Jesus, truly the Son of God, could have easily avoided this. But He remained true to God His Father because He was sent to fulfill all the prophecies. He knows that his sacrificial blood atones for the sins of His followers (past, present and future). He had informed his disciples of this event and prepared them to spread the Good News. It is said that you can find Jesus is on every page of the Bible.

The Jewish officials and Roman soldiers, mock Him in his agony. There was no compassion shown, even the story about the soldier putting a sponge on a stick dipping it in wine vinegar and offering Jesus a drink of sour wine. is pure degradation, as the Romans used sponges on a stick as we use toilet paper. Jesus completed his mission to remove Adam's stain from His followers.

We should remember that this crucifixion occurred during the Jewish Passover period when Jews from all countries were required to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. Is it any wonder that information of this event and His resurrection spread so rapidly. The disciples and surly other witnesses attested to this event.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, we can only kneel in humble awe at your sacrifice in erasing our sins, inherited from Adam at our birth. Lord Jesus, we are truly born again through your sacrificial blood. Amen.**

**Joe Flesch**

**Saturday, March 30**

**Mark 15: 42-47**

**In the Grave**

Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So, when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought fine linen, took Jesus down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus observed where He was laid.

**Prayer: Lord Jesus, you did no wrong and never sinned, but you gave your life for all who did. As Joseph of Arimathea prepared You for burial, prepare my heart for your return by burying the sin that is within me. Help me to truly appreciate the grace and salvation that you give freely despite my sinful nature. Lord, I pray that you would resurrect me in thought, word, and deed in this Easter Season. I pray that with your help, make me quick to listen, slow to anger, and always abounding in lovingkindness as You have been to me. Heavenly Father, I pray all of these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen. Chris Clarke**

NOTES

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