

Mark 10

Introductory Comments

1. This chapter concludes the teaching and healing stories in Mark's gospel. After Bartimaeus, there are no more healings. This chapter also introduces the third Passion prediction unit (10:32-52) where Jesus attempts to explain to his disciples what he (and his followers) will have to go through when they reach Jerusalem.
2. There are many aspects of this chapter that link back to the earlier parts of Mark's Gospel, and thus this chapter serves as a summary of the Gospel and is illustrative of all the soil types described in the Parable of the Sower (Mk 4).
3. Outline of Chapters 9:33-10:52
 - A. 9:30-10:31 – second Passion prediction unit
 1. 9:30-31 – second Passion prediction
 2. 9:32 – disciples don't understand
 3. 9:33-10:31 – Jesus teaches: first/last
 - a. 9:33-10:16 – care for the least
 - i. 9:33-50 – receive children
 1. vv. 33-37 – receive child in Jesus' name
 2. vv. 38-41 – non-follower exorcises in Jesus' name
 3. vv. 42-50 – reject causes of falling away
 - ii. 10:1-12 – rejection of divorce
 1. vv. 1-9 – response to Pharisees
 2. vv. 10-12 – response to disciples
 - iii. 10:13-16 – receive children; kingdom of God
 - b. 10:17-31 – reject riches/gain eternal life
 - i. 10:17-22 – rich man
 - ii. 10:23-30 – riches/new family and eternal life
 - iii. 10:31 – first/last
 - B. 10:32-52 – third Passion prediction unit
 1. 10:32-34 – third Passion prediction
 2. 10:35-40 – James and John request seats of glory
 3. 10:41-45 – Jesus teaches: greatest/servant
 4. 10:46-52 – calls and heals blind Bartimaeus, who follows him on the way

Questions then read Mark 10 aloud

Discussion Questions

1. Who else have we met who was “in the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan”? *John the Baptist. Why do you think Mark might want to call our attention to John the Baptist here? It is precisely John's disapproval of Herod's divorce of his wife and subsequent marriage to his brother's wife that led to John's imprisonment, and death*

(Mark 6). Now Jesus is faced with the same line of questioning. **The Pharisees are said to “test” Jesus in 10:2-9. What do you think their aim is?** Think back to 3:6 – they are trying to destroy him. Their question about divorce was intended to trip him up, and may have been their effort to get him to speak against Herod, and perhaps end up like John did. In that light, these verses should not be seen as the teaching of Jesus about divorce but as his winning another dispute with his opponents.

2. In 9:36-37 Jesus instructs the disciples that when they welcome a child in his name, they receive him (and God). How do the disciples do with these instructions in 10:13-16? They do the opposite. It's just another illustration of the disciples' waywardness. They do not receive children, just as they do not receive the Kingdom of God.

3. What kind of soil does the rich man in 10:17 represent? Thorny. How does he come off in his exchange with Jesus? Self-assured, even smug. How does Jesus respond to him? He loves him. He sees the good soil in him, but also the viny weeds that surround him. **Incidentally, in 10:19 Jesus adds an extra Commandment. Can you find it?** You shall not defraud.

4. In 10:36, Jesus asks the disciples, “What is it you want me to do?” Thinking beyond this one episode, but to the whole Gospel, what are some of the things that the disciples want? They want to be great (9:34), they want to be first (9:35), they want to determine who can be a part of the group (9:38) and who can approach Jesus (10:13). Basically, they want to lord over people like the rulers of their day (10:42-44). They want either riches to qualify one for the kingdom, or leaving everything to be all that is required (10:26-28), they want glory (10:37) and admire concrete honors (9:5, 13:1), they want their physical needs satisfied before considering the needs of their hearts, minds, or spirits (2:23, 8:14-17), AND they want their words to supplant those of the Messiah (8:31-33). They want the things of this world – fame, comfort, wealth, high reputation, authority, and glory.

5. Contrasted to the disciples, what are the desires and traits of those who are healed/good soil? These ones praise Jesus and spread word about him, not themselves (1:45, 5:20, 9:38-41), they gladly serve the needs of others (1:31, 2:3-5, 5:18, 14:8-9), and they don't allow conventional practices or rules to stand in the way of their faith or love (2:4, 5:27-34, 7:25-30, 10:48). Unlike the disciples, they do NOT seek fame, wealth, personal glory, reputation or honor. Instead, they emerge, are healed because of their faith, and then go, all in anonymity.

6. What do you think Jesus means in 10:29-30? There is a redefinition of possessions, family, and success when you follow Christ and are good soil. **Why do you think he throws “with persecutions” in there (10:30)?** This illustrates that going against the grain and their culture will have consequences. But persecution will not be the final word for those on the Way (the ones with faith, good soil, abundant fruit).

7. How do the disciples come off in verse 39 when they say, “We are able?” We have witnessed the disciples be in constant error in response to Jesus, and so their “We

are able” to Jesus’ metaphorical questions about their ability to endure suffering rings with hollow bravado rather than sober reflection, for they follow in fear (10:32), not in faith.

8. Bartimaeus is one of two healing stories where a person is named. Can you remember the other one? Jairus. Do you think the name Bartimaeus has significance? *Some think it refers to a literal person, but there is scant evidence for that. More likely it is a symbolic reference to the fictional narrator of Plato’s most important theological treatise, named “Timaeus,” and a way that Mark emphasizes the broad nature of Jesus ministry (includes Jewish and Gentile).*

9. What kind of story is this one about blind Bartimaeus? Is it a healing story or a call story? *It is both healing AND call story. Like the disciples, Bartimaeus, is named. Also like the disciples, he is called by Jesus (three times in 10:49). This follows the pattern of the call stories where Jesus initiates the call with the person either following or not. It’s interesting to note that while Bartimaeus has actually initiated the contact with Jesus, the three-fold repetition of “call” in 10:49 accentuates Jesus’ initiative in calling Bartimaeus. This story contains all the hallmarks of a healing story, where the one seeking healing initiates contact. Here, Bartimaeus names Jesus in a way that only demons and Peter have named thus far (“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”) but where Peter immediately falls down as he rebukes Jesus, Bartimaeus experiences healing and immediately follows. So, Bartimaeus is not only an example of the fruitfulness of faith, but also the faithfulness of an ideal follower of Jesus.*

10. Comparing Bartimaeus’ call to the disciples, what new light is shed by verse 31, “many who are first will be last, and the last will be first”? *The first called are the hard-hearted disciples, the rocky ground who accept at first, endure for a time, and then fall away when opposition threatens. The last called is the supplicant for healing whose faith saves him, the epitome of good earth. So, “the first will be last and the last first” not only indicates the paradoxical quality of the kingdom of God, it also describes the narrative plan of the entire gospel to this point.*

*** For next session, read Mark 11