

My Favorite Thing About

MARK

Mark 7:1-7

October 09, 2021

On to the book of Mark.

Mark does not identify himself as the writer of the book that bears his name and the earliest attribution does not occur until the 2nd Century.

Mark:

- Is the shortest and most action packed of the **Synoptic Gospels**. The word **"immediately"** is used over 34 times throughout the book. Jesus seems to be rushing around Palestine trying to accomplish as much as He can in the time He has – He has a lot to do and not much time to do it in.
- Was written in Greek
- To a non-Jewish audience - Mark explains Jewish customs and includes original Aramaic words and their translations:
 - **Mark 5:41** - He took her by the hand and said to her, *"Talitha koum!"* {which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"}.
 - **Mark 7:34** - He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, *"Ephphatha!"* {which means, "Be opened!"}.
- Likely before 70 AD.
- Is heavy on miracles = 17 named miracles in the 1st 10 chapters.
 - 1st - Casting out unclean spirits = Mark 1:23-26
 - 2nd - Healing Peter's mother-in-law = Mark 1:29-31
 - 3rd - Healing the Leper = Mark 1:40-45
 - 4th - Healing the Paralytic = Mark 2:3-12
 - 5th - Healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath = Mark 3:1-5
 - 6th - The wind and waves obey Him = Mark 4:35-41
 - 7th - Restoration of Demoniac = Mark 5:1-20
 - 8th - Woman touches Jesus' garment = Mark 5:22-34
 - 9th - Raising Jairus' daughter = Mark 5:35-43
 - 10th - Feeding of the 5,000 = Mark 6:34-44
 - 11th - Jesus walks on water = Mark 6:45-52
 - 12th - Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter = Mark 7:24-30
 - 13th - Healing of deaf-mute = Mark 7:32-36
 - 14th - Feeding of the 4,000 = Mark 8:1-9
 - 15th - Blind man healed = Mark 8:22-26
 - 16th - Jesus heals possessed boy = Mark 9:17-27
 - 17th - Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus = Mark 10:46-52
- Does not mention of Jesus' birth or early life, yet devotes a full 1/3 of the book to the last week of Jesus life.
- Makes only a quick mention of John the Baptist and Jesus' preparation for ministry {**Mark 1:9-11 and Mark 1:12-13**}

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About MARK** ---- **"Teachable Moments"**.

As Jesus raced around Palestine healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead and feeding the masses, He took time to teach. Here are some of those Teachable Moments.....

Sabbath – Mark 2:23-28

One Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grain field. The disciples were hungry so they plucked some of the grain, rubbed the heads together and ate. *“OOOOH ---- Gotch-ya,”* said the Pharisees, who had been trailing along, *“Your disciples are working!! They have broken the Sabbath!”*

“Let’s have a history lesson,” replied Jesus. *“Remember in the Chronicles of Samuel {1 Samuel 21:1-6} when David, your favorite king, and his men came to the house of God and ate the consecrated bread ---- because they were hungry? As you know, they were breaking the law, because only the priests were allowed to eat the consecrated bread. Hmmm.... The Sabbath was made for man, not the other way around and, by the way, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”*

As Creator of the Sabbath, it is God who decides what **IS** Sabbath Keeping and what **IS NOT**. He set apart Sabbath to be a blessing to man – a delight, therefore, meeting the needs of others is **ALWAYS** in keeping with the principle of Sabbath Keeping.

Traditions – Mark 7:1-23

Once again, Jesus found Himself surrounded by religious leaders. On this occasion, Jesus’ disciples were eating with *“unclean”* hands – they had not ceremonially washed before eating.

The Jewish leaders were very careful about following traditions and **Ritual Purity** was a biggie. Ceremonial washing had nothing to do with hygiene. There was no biblical requirement to wash hands before eating. Washing was a way for pious Jews to *“purify”* themselves in order to make sure they didn’t break any of the 613 *“Laws of Moses”* by accident. Contact with a Gentile.... Wash. Contact with a sick person.... Wash. Not sure.... Wash.

It was all about the outward show of *“purity”* and these religious leaders saw an opportunity to trap Jesus: *“Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?”*

Jesus responded: *“Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ {Is. 29:13} You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.* Here is an example: *“Moses said to ‘honor your father and your mother’..... HOWEVER.... You have said that if a man tells his parents that the funds he might have used for their care have been gifted to God {the “Corban”}, he is off the hook and is no longer responsible for them. By doing that, you have replaced the Law of God with human tradition..... It is not what goes into a man that makes him unclean, but what comes out his heart. Because out of a man’s heart comes evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. It is these things that make a man ‘unclean.’”*

In churches, human traditions often carry more weight than the Word of God, but, **“churchi-ness”** and outward shows of piety don’t make up for the true state of a man’s heart. If a man’s heart is evil, who cares if his hands are clean.

Counting the Cost – Mark 8:34-38

Jesus was very popular with the masses and they followed Him everywhere. I mean, He fed them and healed them and raised them from the dead.... **OF COURSE**, He was popular. They were expecting a political coup any day and the disciples were constantly jockeying for position in the *“New Government”*. This was bad news for Jesus, so He called a meeting and spoke to the crowd about what it really meant to follow Him - *“If you are going to follow me, you must be willing to deny yourself and take up your cross. If you care more about saving your life, in the end you will lose it, but if you choose to lose your life because of Me and the Good News about Me, then in the end, you will find the only life that really matters. It will do you no good to gain everything the world says is valuable only to lose your soul in the end. There is nothing more valuable than your soul. If, before men, you are ashamed to call yourself My follower or are ashamed of the words I speak, then, when I come again in My Father’s glory, I will be ashamed of you before all of heaven.”*

Following Jesus is a serious commitment. True followers don’t only follow when it benefits them – they follow even when it costs them everything. Those are the kind of followers Jesus is looking for - so, count the cost first.

Greatness in the Kingdom – Mark 10:17-45

The Rich Young Ruler had just walked away from Jesus. Giving up all his wealth was just too great an ask. Jesus turned to His disciples, *“The rich will find it very difficult to enter the kingdom. In fact, it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle.”* Confused, the disciples responded, *“Then who can be saved?”* Because you see, wealth was a sign of your *“saved-ness”*. Wealthy = In. Poor = out.

Bold Peter exclaimed, *“We’ve left everything to follow you, what do we get in return?”*

Jesus responded, *"No one who leaves everything to follow me, will fail to receive 100 times more than what he has..... including persecution. And in the age to come – Eternal life. HOWEVER, the first will be last and the last will be first."*

The disciples remained confused.

Now as they made their way to Jerusalem, Jesus spoke to them again about His suffering, death and resurrection, which was now only days away. As if they had heard not a word Jesus had just spoken, James and John pulled Him aside:

J&J: *"Will you do for us whatever we ask?"*

Jesus: *"What do you want Me to do for you?"*

J&J: *"When you come in your glory, we'd like to sit on Your right and on Your left."*

Jesus: *"You have no idea what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am about to drink?"*

J&J: *"Yes, we can."*

Jesus: *"You will, indeed, drink the cup I am about to drink, but it's not my decision who will sit on my right and left."*

When the rest of the disciples heard about this little exchange, they were angry.... Probably because they had not thought of it first.

Jesus called a group huddle, *"Listen fellas, you know good and well that those who are regarded as "Great" in the Gentile world flex their muscles and lord their authority over everyone. My followers DO NOT act that way. If you want to be great in My kingdom, you must have a servant mentality and put others above yourself. Why? Because I did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give My life as a ransom for many."*

Jesus set the example. He, Commander of Heavenly Armies, humbled himself to the point of death to save humanity. Human greatness and Godly greatness are not the same. Human greatness is all about getting the honor of men and the goodies that come along with that honor. Godly greatness is all about service and sacrifice. Considering the needs of other's even to the point of personal sacrifice and loss.

Final Lessons – Mark 13

Jesus was back in Jerusalem and by now, the religious leaders were desperate to destroy Him.

Jesus departed the Temple for the final time and as His little group made their way up the Mount of Olives, the disciples turned and looked at the Temple: *"Gorgeous! Have ever seen anything so beautiful?!"*

Jesus: *"Do you see these great buildings? I'm telling you now that not one stone will be left upon another."*

Wait, what?!

Later, Peter, James, John and Andrew went to Jesus privately: *"What did you mean? When will it happen? What signs should we look for?"*

5-27 – *Many will claim, 'I am He', and many will be deceived.*

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars – don't be alarmed. The end is still to come.

There will be earthquakes and famines.

You will be handed over to local councils and flogged in the synagogues.

You will stand before governors and kings.

The gospel must first be preached to all nations.

Don't worry about what to say when you are arrested. Say what is given you, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Brother will betray brother, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong-- let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...

Those days will be full of dread for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now-- and never to be equaled again. If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them.

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect-- if that were possible.

In those days, following that distress:

The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from the sky.

The heavenly bodies will be shaken.

At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory...

Listen.... No one knows ---- I don't even know when I'm coming back ---- only the My Father knows, so, be on guard. Be alert. Keep watch. You don't want the owner of the house to find you sleeping when he returns. I'll say it again ---- WATCH!!

Jesus gave the disciples what they asked for ---- signs. But He cleverly mixed events in the near future with events far into the future, most of which the disciples would not experience personally. **"Signs"** were not the most important take away from this final teachable moment. **"Signs"** can strengthen our faith, but they are not transformational. Jesus knew that it is all too easy for humans to get caught up in **"sign watching"** and miss what's truly important ---- being prepared. That's why He ended the session with a command – Be alert. Be on guard. Don't get caught sleeping. Be ready.

In the midst of all the frantic activity of those 3 ½ years, Jesus found moments to teach. Moments to change the direction of well ingrained thought and tradition. Moments that would take root and grow and flower and produce fruit well into the future. Incredibly important and life changing Teachable Moments.

That's My Favorite Thing About MARK.