

WE SOURCES:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

JESUS CALLS PEOPLE

Lesson 1

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

Take a moment to close your eyes and calm your breathing. After a minute or two ask God to open your eyes this Lenten season to the wisdom contained in the Gospel of Mark.

If you would like to know more about Lent before we look at Mark, here are two helpful videos to view on youtube: Search for a video called Lent in 3 Minutes (NEW!) by BustedHalo OR search youtube for "Ash Wednesday & Lent in Two Minutes" by BustedHalo.

For the next seven weeks we are focusing on various stories in the Gospel of Mark. As an introduction to Mark, view this video from The Bible Project on youtube. Just watch it from the start to time 2:22. This will give you a brief background for our stories. Search youtube for "Overview: Mark" by BibleProject.

The book of Mark according to the video starts by asking the question Who is Jesus? And then shows Jesus' call to start spreading the Good News that God's Kingdom has come near! Why is it important for Mark to start with this call?

What other things are important for you to hear from the video?

SCRIPTURE

The scripture not only talks about the call of Jesus but also the call of the first disciples (1:16) and then a chapter later the call of Levi (2:13).

Read Mark 1:16-20

QUESTIONS

Reflect in a journal or take time to ponder your thoughts to these questions.

What does "Follow me and I will make you fish for people"? What might that look like in your life? Are there ministries for which you feel called and would be willing to "leave your nets"?

Imagine the shoreline with Zebedee and the hired men standing and watching Simon and Andrew and James and John walk off following behind Jesus. What do you think they are thinking at that moment? Is there a price for being called by God?

Read Mark 2:13-17

Again, Jesus calls and tells Levi to follow him. Given that Levi then feeds Jesus, the disciples and sinners and tax collectors, what gifts do you think Levi has to offer Jesus and therefore God's ministry on earth?

What gifts do you have to offer God?

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

In our Confession of Faith, 6.11, it states "The motive for Christian stewardship is the gratitude for God's abundant love and mercy, accompanied by the desire to share all of God's good gifts with others." We hear the call of the Holy Spirit in our lives and we desire to answer that call to use our gifts for others because we have received abundance from God and respond in gratitude for it. Answering a call from God is not a duty or a task. It is gracious pull to share what we have experienced with others. No wonder Jesus was spreading the Good News that God's Kingdom has come near! No wonder the disciples immediately dropped everything to follow Jesus! The urge to answer the call is a powerful one.

ACTIVITY: TAKING INVENTORY

The now famous guru of housecleaning, Marie Kondo, asks each person she works with to look at an item (clothing, décor, whatever) and ask the question: "Does this spark joy in me?" Or does this bring me joy? By doing this a lot of the clutter in the house is swept away before the organizing even begins.

You are invited to grab a piece of paper and pen and begin making a list of those things in your life that are building walls so that you are not seeing the important things in your life: your gifts, your priorities, your call. You may immediately make your list or you may have to chew on this all week. Either is ok.

After you have your list, take some time to reflect on ways that you might start breaking the walls down. You may not want to completely destroy the walls. You may want to carefully take down each brick in order to reuse it at another time in another place. For instance, a friend or loved one

may be doing everything for you to the extent that you are not allowed to experience anything for yourself. You may want to work to address that situation doing it carefully and kindly so that when it comes time to rebuild a strong relationship back there are "supplies" which with to build.

Then make a final list of the gifts and priorities that are left. What are those things that you can use to fulfill a call that you may or may not know that you are even going to receive. After all, the disciples didn't know they were to be called by Jesus until it happened. It may be that as you reveal these gifts that you will receive the call to use them.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, I open myself to you. All that I have and don't have is because of your abundant love and mercy. Help me to listen carefully to you and feel the guidance of the Holy Spirit so I may not miss your call to me. Give me the courage to answer as the disciples did, without hesitation and with abundant energy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

- **Jesus Calls People**
 - o Calls first disciples 1:16
 - o Calls Levi 2:13
- **Jesus Speaks to Large Crowds/ Teaching/Feeding**
 - o Teaches by the Seaside 3:7
 - o Feeding of Five Thousand 6:30
 - o Feeding the Four Thousand 8
- **Jesus Teaches with Stories**
 - o Parables Chapter 4 & 12
- **Jesus Heals & Cares for People**
 - o Healing stories throughout
 - o Jesus Bless the Children 10:13
- **First Commandment & Other Important Teachings**
 - o The First Commandment 12:28
 - o Who is the Greatest 9:33
- **Jesus telling about Resurrection**
 - o 8:31, 9:30, 10:32
- **The Last Week**
 - o Chapter 11 - 16

WE SOURCES:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

JESUS SPEAKS TO LARGE CROWDS

Lesson 2

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

Take a moment to close your eyes and calm your breathing. After a minute or two ask God to open your eyes this Lenten season to the wisdom contained in the Gospel of Mark.

This second week of Lent, we are focusing on the stories about Jesus speaking to large crowds in the Gospel of Mark. To begin our time together, view this video on youtube about Jesus feeding the multitudes. Watch the entire video which is 3:24 minutes. This will give you a look at one of the stories in Mark. Search youtube for "Feeding the multitude" by Dickson Ng.

The story of Jesus teaching by the seaside in Mark 3 is also told by Matthew (12). Matthew also tells the story about Jesus feeding the four thousand (Mark 8, Matthew 15). But the miracle

story of the feeding of the 5000 is found in all four gospels (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, and John 6). This tells us just how important this story is. And why not? Jesus took five loaves and two fish and fed 5000 men (not even counting the women and children)! The disciples above all were taught in this story not to worry. They almost ridiculed Jesus after he told them to feed the people. You can almost hear Jesus sigh and then ask what resources are available. In the video, Jesus lowered the basket barely glancing at it because although the disciples were surprised what was in the basket, Jesus was not. The video does add a bit of scripture about not worrying about food or drink or clothing from Matthew 6. This is not found in the book of Mark, but does reinforce the idea that God will provide our needs.

Indeed worry does not help a situation in any way, shape or form. What other good pieces of information can we glean from the video either through what is seen or heard?

SCRIPTURE

The scripture speaks about God providing our needs—not only physical but spiritual needs.

Read Mark 3:7-12, Mark 6:30-44 and Mark 8:1-10.

QUESTIONS

Reflect in a journal or take time to ponder your thoughts to these questions.

What do these three stories have to say about Jesus? About his disciples? About those who followed him?

It is clear that Jesus asks the disciples and the people not to worry about material things; God will provide what we need. This is certain true. How do we reconcile that there are those in our world that don't have enough to eat and drink and wear? Does that mean that their faith is not strong enough? What does it mean?

Close your eyes and picture yourself sitting on that hill listening to Jesus until late at night. You are close enough that you hear the conversation between Jesus and his disciples, see the five loaves and two fish and hear Jesus bless them. You watch with the disciples as the food is sufficient for all the thousands of people gathered. What are you thinking and feeling?

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Worry and anxiety are a natural part of our lives today. We live in a society where too many countries have an "end-the-world" bomb, where children can obtain guns and shoot up their schools and neighbors, where even our churches lock their doors during worship services lest a crazed family member come in the sanctuary and cause violence to reign freely. And yet, Jesus' words from Mark still ring true. We are called to have a counterculture mindset. God will provide for our needs. We must believe that in the face of the worries we see in society every day.

ACTIVITY: LAYING DOWN OUR BURDENS

The spiritual "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah Since I Laid My Burdens Down" speaks about feeling better and being able to sing glory Hallelujah since I laid my burdens down. Although this is not

always easy to do, there is a benefit in being able to visually do something that reminds us that that is what Jesus calls us to do.

Grab your box and crafting supplies and take some time to decorate the box making it attractive to you. If crafting is not your thing, you might invite a child or youth in your life to decorate it for you. This has the added benefit of reminding you of their love. You can have your box identified as your Burden Box or it can be anonymous. You can have it out in plain view or put it away bringing it out only when you need it.

After you have your decorated box, have small slips of paper and a pen in or beside it. Every night take your box to where you pray. If you don't have a place, you may want to designate one and supply it with candles, crosses, meditative music or other things that will help you pray. As you pray, there may be particular things you notice that you are worried about. Take a slip of paper, write that worry on it and put it in your box. As you do so, ask God to take this burden that you have laid down so you can let go of it. Ideally that burden will be lifted from your mind and heart. If it continues to worry you, you can write it on another slip of paper. Each week review the burdens you have "laid down." If any have been resolved or have completely left your mind you can throw them away. Otherwise keep praying that it be taken by God.

If you would like to share your burden, exchange boxes with a spouse, child, sibling or friend and have them pray for you and your burdens. Then get your box back and begin a new week.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, I give you all of the worries that are weighing heavy on me. I pray that you will take them from me and give me the peace of mind only you can give. Help me to ease the burdens of others around me so they too can feel your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WE SOURCES:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

JESUS TEACHES WITH STORIES

Lesson 3

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

Take a moment to close your eyes and calm your breathing. After a minute or two ask God to open your eyes this Lenten season to the wisdom contained in the Gospel of Mark.

This is the third week of Lent; we are talking about some of the parables that Jesus taught. Not only did he tell these stories but he told why he used them, explained the stories themselves and then explained why he was using them again. As Jesus did a lot in Mark, he spoke in a sort of code and demanded that no one tell who he really is. He did this by telling parables claiming that those who are in the kingdom of God have the secret code breaker. Yet even with all of this, the gospel of Mark continues to answer the question "Who is Jesus?" View the two videos below, the first from The Bible Project on youtube

by searching "Overview: Mark". Watch this first video from 3:00-3:50. Watch the second one in its entirety. Search youtube for "The Parable of the Sower - Animated Bible Lesson" by The Animated Bible. This will give you a brief background for our stories and a closer look at one parable in particular.

The parables in Mark 4 are all teaching about faith and being able to share your faith story. The Parable of the Sower is about hearing the word, accepting it and sharing it. The Lamp under the bushel is about not hiding your faith but sharing it with others. Even the Parable of the Mustard Seed speaks of having a small bit of faith being able to do big things.

Was there anything in either of the videos that surprised you? If so reflect on it for a few minutes and what it means to your faith.

SCRIPTURE

Again, Mark 4 stories speak about our faith in God and sharing that faith with others who may not have heard yet.

In Mark 12, we hear a metaphor of what happened when God sent messengers and then Jesus himself to tell the Good News only to have the world kill them. This is not a pleasant parable. It does however represent what we believe pretty accurately.

Read Mark 4:1-34 and Mark 12:1-12.

QUESTIONS

Reflect in a journal or take time to ponder your thoughts to these questions.

Do you know people in your life that are like each of the seed that fell on the different kinds of ground? What does this parable say about what you are responsible for in relation to them?

Which of the parables in chapter 4 do you most relate to? Why?

The parable in chapter 12 is one that most pastors don't like to preach on because of the harshness of it. Of course this is a story about God's sending messengers and finally his son to tell the message. What wisdom should we take away from this parable?

Close your eyes and reflect on the Parable of the Sower again. You may even think about the second video you watched. Is there anything we might do as Christians to create the kind of ground in people to make them more receptive to hearing the word?

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

It is important to have faith and it is equally important to be able to share that faith. However, most Christians are not comfortable with the "old time evangelism" where specific steps are shared to lead someone to Christ. This is why writing and sharing our faith stories has become more common these days. It is a genuine way to share in a personal way what is true for them.

ACTIVITY: TELLING MY STORY

Spend some time in prayer and reflection praying you will be granted insight from God. Then reflect on your faith journey. What was your first exposure to Christ and the gospel? When did you recognize and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior? How has your life changed along the journey? Incorporate the answer to these questions and other things and people that have helped shape your life and faith.

Then starting writing your faith story down. It doesn't have to be brilliant writing, just tell the story. Don't forget to tell where you are now and where you hope to go in the future. After you get something down on paper, thank God for the guidance in this process and let the story rest for a while. It is hoped you will continue to think about your story and remember things you have left out and want to add. Make notes so you can remember what you want to add when the time comes. Then after some more time and prayer, modify and polish your story until it resonates as the truth in your life.

Read through your story on a regular basis in order to tell it to someone if the situation presents itself. You don't want to have it memorized so when telling it, it seems more like a performance. Simply remind yourself of where you have been and where you are today.

You may want to record your faith story and send it to the Communications Ministry Team (mhg@cumberland.org). There are already faith stories on the cpcmc.org website and yours can be added to them. Look for other ways to share your faith story. You may want to encourage your pastor to have a time for faith storytelling during the remainder of Lent, either in the Sunday morning worship service or at another time.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, I am so grateful for being given the "code" so I can open and understand your word. Give me courage and strength to share my story when the opportunity arises. Allow me to share confidently and speak genuinely of your grace and mercy in my life. Give me a peace of mind knowing that you will place people in my path who need to hear your good word. Help me to share with them what they need to hear so they too can come to know you better. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WE SOURCES:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

JESUS HEALS AND CARES FOR PEOPLE

Lesson 4

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

This is the fourth week of Lent and we are addressing the healing stories found throughout Mark and the act of Jesus blessing the children. As we know Jesus remained hush-hush about who he was in Mark. The video for this week addresses that a little bit and how it relates to his healing of many people. Search youtube for "Mark" by Bible Project. Watch it from the start to 2:02. This will again give you a brief overview of the book of Mark and talk a little bit more about Jesus' healing stories.

Mark records thirteen instances of Jesus healing and some of those are not single healings but where it simply says that many people were brought to Jesus and healed. These healings are

recorded in chapter 1 (after the disciples were called) through chapter 10 (leading all the way up to Palm Sunday.) There are no more recorded after that.

Just before Jesus' last recorded healing of Blind Bartimaeus, Jesus rejected the disciples' request and brought the children gathered around him closer, blessed them and used them as a "Disciples' Sermon." He raised their attitudes and very essence as an example to all who would follow Jesus.

Did the video clarify anything for you?

SCRIPTURE

It may take longer than usual to read the scripture, but take time to read all thirteen of the healing stories in Mark. Notice carefully the attitude of those who have been healed and/or the people who have brought them to Jesus. Do the same while reading the story of Jesus blessing the children.

Read Mark 1:21-28, Mark 1:29-34, Mark 1:40-45, Mark 2:1-12, Mark 3:1-6, Mark 1:20-30, Mark 5:1-20, Mark 5:21-43, Mark 6:53-56, Mark 7:31-37, Mark 8:22-26, Mark 9:14-29, Mark 10:46-52 (healings) and Mark 10:13-16 (blessing of the children).

QUESTIONS

Reflect in a journal or take time to ponder your thoughts to these questions.

Jesus began by telling the first several people (and demons) that he healed not to tell others about the healing. Then he stopped. Why do you think he stopped telling them?

Which of these healing stories do you like the best? Why?

What do all of these people have in common other than their need to be healed by Jesus?

Close your eyes and imagine the setting in which Jesus and the disciples find themselves with the little children. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Taste? Pretend you are one of the characters in the story—Jesus, the disciples, the children, the parents, or an onlooker. What do you think when you hear the story play out? How do you feel? You may want to do this again changing which character you are each time.

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

We are all broken and in need of the healing only Jesus can give. We may be afraid to approach Jesus face to face lest he judge and condemn us. We may be praying for the healing of a loved one in our family knowing we need to be bold when approaching God because the sickness is killing us or even killing our loved one literally. Whatever our brokenness is, we can always approach God with an attitude of faith because unlike others who might reject us and turn us away, Jesus is always ready to gather us in his arms and bless us.

ACTIVITY: TAKE TIME FOR RENEWAL

We are so busy as a society that we feel it is somehow selfish to provide ourselves with self-care. However Jesus seems to be calling us to a time of self-care, whatever that looks like.

Reflect for a moment on the times in your life you have especially felt renewed. It might have been treating yourself to a massage or a trip to the chiropractor. It may have been putting away the cell phone, computer or other forms of technology for an hour or two and bask in the creation of God with a long walk, or playing with kids or grandkids, or sitting with your favorite beverage and doing some praying in color (if you don't know what this is, google it!), or whatever.

Then think about what it would take to make such self-care happen. You may have to get a babysitter for the kids or pets. You may have to give your technology to a friend so you are not tempted to peek. Whatever it is you have to do, start making plans to get those things done so you can have the time you need for some self-care.

Then do it. You may have many excuses at the ready for not doing it. There are several reasons TO do it:

1. it is important to do self-care so you don't become more broken and in need of more healing,
2. you can be a better self to your family and friends if you are in a state of mind that is refreshed and at peace,
3. and finally because God modeled it for us and says that we should do it—take Sabbath. So don't wait. You will be blessed.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, I am always rushing here and there so much that I do not take the time to care for myself. I know that this is not your will for my life. As you have said in your scripture "Come to me all who labor and are heavy-ladened and I will give you rest." Allow me to do so without feeling guilty or lazy, but with a grateful heart. Help me to model to others what you wish for us all—the peace that passes all understanding. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WE SOURCES:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT AND OTHER IMPORTANT TEACHINGS

Lesson 5

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

This is the fifth week of Lent and we are looking at the First Commandment that Jesus gave us and then at the story of Who is the Greatest. One is right before Palm Sunday (Who is the greatest?) and one right after, during Holy Week (The First Commandment). The video for this week is about the Law, the story of the Israelites and their failure to follow the Law. Search youtube for "The Law" by Bible Project. Watch the entire video below, from The Bible Project on youtube. This will give you a walk through the Torah and the books of the Prophets that make up the old Law so we can then think about the First Commandment Jesus introduced in the book of Mark.

Mark continues in his book to answer the question "Who is Jesus?" And this week's scripture (Mark 12:28-34) reveals that he is the fulfillment of the Law as he loved God fully and loved others. As the video says, since Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law, he sent the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts that we might follow him and fulfill the law to love God and love others.

The opposite story of the Mark 12 passage is that of the disciples arguing over who is the greatest (Mark 9:33-37). Instead of following the First Commandment, they wanted to lord over one another rather than love one another.

What was the most important thing that the video revealed to you?

SCRIPTURE

It is amazing that Jesus was able to reduce all of the Law that had been handed down to the Israelites through their history into the most succinct commandment that encapsulated all the Law. It is also amazing in a whole different way that even with all Jesus had taught the disciples, they still didn't understand.

Read Mark 12:28-34 and Mark 9:33-37.

QUESTIONS

Reflect in a journal or take time to ponder your thoughts to these questions.

What does it mean to you to love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength? Do you feel that you fulfill this commandment?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said that the scribe who asked him this question was “not far from the kingdom of God”?

Why do you think Jesus used a child as an example for how to treat others? Do you think the disciples understood what Jesus was saying to them? Why or why not?

Jesus said “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” He modeled that when he washed the disciples’ feet. Close your eyes and imagine you are seated and that Jesus bends over and begins to wash your feet.

How does he look? What expression does he have on his face? How do you feel? What are you thinking? Meditate on that image a little longer. Then offer a prayer to God thanking him for sending Jesus into this world to show us all how to be servants.

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Servanthood is not something that is valued in our society. In fact, we sometimes pretend servers in a restaurant are invisible after they take our order. And in most churches today, the idea of having a foot washing service sends panic through its members. The truth is that we must be able to both receive the gift of being served AND give the gift of our service to others. In that way, we are living out the First Commandment.

ACTIVITY: BEING A SERVANT OF ALL

Read Mark 9:33-37. Notice if any words or phrases stand out to you. Then close your eyes and meditate on that word or phrase.

Read Mark 9:33-37 a second time and remind yourself of the word or phrase that stood out to you. Then think about those around you—in your community or your church or at work. Close your eyes and meditate on what the needs are of the people from one of those communities.

Read Mark 9:33-37 a third time. Remind yourself of your word or phrase and of three or four of the needs you identified when you last meditated. Close your eyes and meditate on the gifts that you have available to you. Then see if there are any of those gifts that might meet the needs you identified. Think about how you might be of service to your community. Reflect on what steps you would need to take and what supplies you would need to gather in order to be of service in that way. Plan to follow through on that service knowing that through it, you might show your love to both God and others.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, I know in my heart of hearts that I want to be first, to be successful and to be respected in the eyes of the world. And yet, God calls to me to be last and servant of all. I ask that you would give me an attitude of humility so I can be of service to others and through that service, show you that I love you. Help me to model to the little ones around me that to be a servant is to be closer to you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

WE SOURCES:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Lesson 6

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

This is the sixth week of Lent and we are coming very close to Holy Week. We are reading scriptures in Mark where Jesus alludes to his death and resurrection. There are two videos for this week that talk about the differences Jesus had with his disciples when he told them about his being Messiah and what exactly that meant. Watch these two videos below, both from The Bible Project. Search youtube for "Overview: Mark" to watch the from 3:50-5:50. Search youtube for "Mark" by BibleProject and the for the second video and watch from 2:02-3:03.

Jesus in the book of Mark continued yet again to try to answer the questions about who he is, but the disciples did not want to hear it and did not understand. There are three scriptures this

week where Jesus tried to reveal the truth to his disciples and why things have to happen as he had explained.

According to the video, why do you think the disciples don't understand and why Jesus went so far as to call Peter Satan?

SCRIPTURE

It is not really a surprise that the disciples are not able to fathom that the way Jesus describes his death and resurrection is actually an accurate picture of future events. Right after Jesus rebuked Peter, he said "For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human." Then he continued on with the ideas that life equals death, and death equals life, and if we are ashamed of him then he will be ashamed of us.

Read Mark 8:31-9:1, Mark 9:30-32 and Mark 10:32-34.

QUESTIONS

Reflect in a journal or take time to ponder your thoughts to these questions.

What does it mean to you to take up your cross and follow Jesus Christ? Do you feel you could do this literally if called to?

What reasons did Mark have for recording Jesus foretelling his death and resurrection three times? Do you think Jesus actually said

this three times, or that Mark wrote it three times because of its importance? Or both?

If you had been one of the disciples, would you have been afraid to ask Jesus what he meant about his death and resurrection being the way he described? Why or why not?

The disciples heard Jesus talk about his death and resurrection over and over again. Close your eyes and image you are one of the twelve and Jesus has just told you that he would be condemned to death, mocked and spit upon, flogged and killed. Jesus told you before that he was the Messiah, the one who was supposed to be the savior and king of the world and given that reality, you yourself have expected to be treated like royalty.

How do you feel? Anger, confusion, denial? Then Jesus says after all of this, he will be raised from death on the third day. Does this change what you have been feeling? Does it raise other feelings? What would you whisper to the person seated next you about what Jesus just said?

Offer a thankful prayer to God for sending Jesus into this world to be our savior.

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Believing in Jesus' death and resurrection takes a lot of faith. After all, Paul writes that Christ's followers are seen by the world as fools for Christ. And yet, our faith gives us the confidence to confess it is true. We read about the deaths the disciples suffered later in their lives because they believed. We hear stories of Christians who were killed for their faith. We must continue to build our faith through prayer, scripture reading and study so we are ready to "take up our cross" no matter the cost.

ACTIVITY: REMEMBERING THE SAINTS IN YOUR LIFE

Grab a paper and pen and begin making a list of people who have been the "saints" in your life—those who "ran the race before us" and mentored us whether they were alive to do so or they did so through our reading of their books.

After you have your list, take a good amount of time focusing your mind on one of the names at a time. Think about how in their lives they took up their cross and followed Christ. It may have been that they had a certain impairment that made others with the same impairment want to talk to them. In the midst of their conversation, they may have been able to offer their faith as a way they deal with their impairment. Write these down next to their names.

Then take some time to meditate on your own life. Is there some way you are already taking up your cross and following Jesus? Are there places in your life you have been thinking might fulfill this in your life, but you are not willing or have not yet taken up the cross? If so, pray for courage and the skills you need to do so. If not, pray for an opportunity to surface in your life.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, you know my heart and know that many times I am focused on the things that are human rather than the things that are divine. I have not wanted to take up my cross because it is too hard. Give me the courage to follow in the way of the saints who have gone before me. Help me to be willing to lose my life in order to gain it. Help me to always be proud to name your son as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name, Amen.

WEsources:

A Resource FOR ALL OF US

GOSPEL OF
Mark

Personal Devotion

THE PASSION OF CHRIST

Lesson 7

RESOURCES

- Computer or Tablet
- Bible
- Pen
- Paper or Journal

GATHERING

This is Holy Week and will be the end of Lent. We are reading chapters 11-16 in Mark that tell the story of Holy Week—the last week of Jesus' life on earth. There are two videos for this week that take us from Palm Sunday to the resurrection of Jesus. Watch these two videos below, both from The Bible Project on youtube. Search youtube for "Overview: Mark" to watch the from 5:50 to the end. Search youtube for "Mark" by BibleProject and the for the second video and watch from 3:03 to the end.

The videos talk about Jesus being the Messianic King and the crucified Christ. And of all people to finally get this, it is a centurion who says that he is the Son of God and not any of his followers.

The videos also highlight the fact that the book of Mark ends abruptly with the women running

from the tomb. He uses this as a tool to nudge his readers into having to think for themselves almost as if they must finish the story.

What is the most important thing to you that these videos portray about Holy Week?

SCRIPTURE

There are two alternate endings for Mark probably because anyone reading the original might shy away from its abruptness. If it was abrupt, the second shorter ending, ties everything up with a neat little bow. And the longer ending seems to throw in the kitchen sink as if they were still trying to continue the disciples' misunderstanding, then puts in the commission found at the end of Matthew, and then ties everything up with a neat little bow. Whichever ending you prefer or believe to be the original, it is apparent that the women did tell the disciples and they either believed them or went to look for themselves. For Jesus' followers did spread the Good News so much so that we are still spreading it today.

Read Mark 11:1-16:20.

QUESTIONS

It is interesting that even after Palm Sunday to the plot to kill Jesus, there are still quite a few things Jesus needs to do and say: cursing the fig tree, cleansing the Temple, the Parable of the Wicked

Tenants (a parable paralleling what has and is happening to Jesus), questions about paying taxes and resurrection, the widow's offering, the destruction of the Temple and the need for watchfulness.

What is the importance of these things being found after Jesus was hailed and before he was killed?

Why do you think those who saw the woman anointing Jesus' feet really argued against it? Why do you think Jesus said that the poor are always with us?

What is the reason for Jesus using bread and wine for the Passover meal and we use for communion now?

Close your eyes and image you are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James or Salome who were bringing spices to anoint Jesus body in the tomb. You notice that the tomb is open when you get there and you are all confused and apprehensive about entering the tomb. You walk into the tomb and are met by a young man dressed in white and he tells you not to be afraid. He tells you that Jesus is not here but is risen from the dead. Then the young man tells you to go out and tell the disciples the good news.

What are you feeling? How can this be? Do you believe the young man? What do you say to the other women? What will you do next?

Offer a prayer to God thanking him that Jesus was raised from the dead and that we can tell that good news.

SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

Fear is a real thing and it can cause us to be paralyzed rather than doing what we know needs to be done. Fear can cause it turn in on ourselves rather than be in relationship with others. It is

interesting to note that whenever the angels appear the first thing they say is "Don't be afraid! I have good news." The women who came to care for Jesus' body may have been scared to death when they ran from the tomb. But they did eventually tell the good news. Holy Week is a perfect time to tell the good news, to share it with our children, and to celebrate the best news ever—Jesus Christ is Risen! Hallelujah!

ACTIVITY: CELEBRATING EASTER ALL YEAR

We have a tendency to celebrate Christmas in a big way, and Easter often gets the short end of the stick. Grab a paper and pen and head your paper "Because Christ died, and is risen for me, I am going to" Then begin making a list of all the things that might be appropriate to do to celebrate Easter.

After you have done this, assign one of the things on your list to a particular month. In May, I will do this and in June I will do that. Plan for the rest of the year placing appropriate activities in the months that make the most sense. And be diligent in completing these acts of celebration for the rest of the year. The good news of Easter is too big to celebrate just once a year!

Then take some time to look back on all of the things you learned and did during this time of Lent. What was the most meaningful thing? What would you like to try again? Plan to make Lent a time to dig deeper every year.

Close your time with this prayer: O God, thank you so much for this time I have spent with you this Lent. Thank you for Mark and Jesus' followers for the part they played in fulfilling your kingdom here on earth. Help me to reflect more than this time of year. Help me to be your witness to the world. Give me the strength and courage and gifts that I need to help your kingdom on earth too. In Jesus' name, Amen.