

**Lent Devotions
2024
Immanuel Lutheran Church**



**Devotions on Mark's Gospel
By Pastor Boyer**

Dear Reader,

This little devotion book goes through the Gospel of Mark. We dwell on what Jesus has done for us. His baptism, miracles, and parables all point us to His work to forgive us by dying for our sins on the tree. May our Lord bless you as you study His Word.

In Christ Jesus crucified,
Pastor Boyer

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February 14

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. – Mark 1.4

Mark's Gospel is fast paced. There's no time to be bogged down with details about the birth of a child. No room either for shepherds or magi. Mark records no long sermons of Jesus. But Jesus is moving immediately from one place to another. Miracles and healings and demons abound in Mark's Gospel.

You can hear the author through this work. Mark wasn't there to see much of what Jesus had done, but he had listened to someone who was there- the apostle Peter. Mark's Gospel is Mark listening to and writing down Peter's sermons.

This explains why there is so much action in Mark's Gospel and why Jesus is always on the move. Peter was a man of action and his sermons reflect it. So, suddenly there is John! Almost out of nowhere! No Zechariah and Elizabeth, no angel in the temple, not even Zechariah being unable to talk.

Peter has a purpose. He wants to speed to the most important things. This Gospel races to the climax of Jesus' death on the cross. That is exactly where our Lenten season is going, to the cross. Of all the actions of God the cross is the most important. There our sins are paid for, the love of God is shown to us, and God is revealed. John baptizes and preaches to lead others to the Christ and what He would do. Let us, this Lent, focus on the most important things of what God has done for us.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You speed Your Son along to the cross. Grant me to pay attention to all He has done for me that I would be confident He has forgiven all my sins. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 15

And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." - Mark 1.11

It is important that Jesus is the Son of the Father. It had been promised through the ages that God, Himself, would come to deal with the sins of sinners. Only God could pay for the sins of sinners. There was no other way. The Father is clear, this Jesus is His beloved Son.

Jesus is true God. Of the same substance and essence as the Father. He only is able to take on sins and pay for them completely. He is beloved of the Father also. At just the right time the Father wills the Son to come to this earth. The Son follows the will of the Father. The Father wills the Son to pay for the sins of sinners. The Son does. Jesus is beloved as He follows the will of the Father to save sinners.

At His baptism, Jesus begins to take up your sins. He stoops down into that dirty water and gathers your sins. He carries them all to the tree. He follows the Father's plan to the tree for you. How loved you are that the Father would send His Son to die in your place!

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to this sinful earth to take on my sins. Jesus did exactly that through His baptism, He carried my sins to the tree and died for me. Grant me to thank You continually for Your mercy and love. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 16

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. - Mark 1.12

Jesus is thrown out into the wilderness. Does this seem appropriate for the Son of God? Should He not be revered, honored, and worshiped? Nope, He is thrown out. This was the lot of the people of Israel as they came up from the promised land. They were cast out of the promised land because of their disobedience and forced to wander.

Jesus redoes their wandering. But He does not sin. While the Israelites grumbled over food and water, Jesus remains faithful. Jesus

never wavers in His commitment to the Father. Jesus is Israel reduced to one. He takes on the sins of all. He is tempted and tried, but does not give in. He keeps Himself pure and holy for you.

Jesus was driven out that you would never be cast away. Because of His rejection you are welcomed before the Father. The depths of the humiliation that Jesus endured grants you the sweetness of the mercy you receive. He is cast away that you would be with Him. He dies that you would live.

Prayer: Father, Your Son was rejected in my place during His earthly ministry. He took my place under the law and paid for my sins. I am forgiven before You. I thank You for all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

February 17

And saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." - Mark 1.15

Jesus proclaimed this and it sounds almost exactly like what John was preaching. There is a connection between the two; they sound alike and preach alike. So listen to John and Jesus and repent.

To repent is to understand our sins before God. This begins by considering the Ten Commandments that were given through Moses. Those laws may seem simple to keep. But as we look deeper we find that God demands more than lip service to His law. He demands total obedience of body, heart, and mind.

So examine your life. Have you honored God perfectly? Worshiped Him completely? Loved preaching and His Word? Have you honored authority? Helped and supported your neighbor in his body? Honored God with your body and have all your desires been pure? Have you not coveted, but desired the best for your neighbor?

Repent. Turn from sin and understand that you are not holy before God. He alone must forgive you and make you pure. The Kingdom of God comes near you to grant you new life. Jesus loves and forgives you. It is time, simply trust God amid your sins.

Prayer: Father in heaven, I am sinful before You and before those around me. My sins are my own and I repent before You. Forgive

me through the death that Jesus has died for me and grant me life eternal. In His Name. Amen.

February 18

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. – Mark 1.16

Peter gets right to it. He is called first and now the Gospel has much more detail for He was with Jesus after this. Peter makes a point to show you the way he was called. He was not seeking Jesus or living a life others would call holy. He was just doing his job with his brother. He didn't expect Jesus to walk by the Sea and call to him. Would he have ever thought he would leave boat and nets to follow?

But Peter did exactly that. Jesus called and Peter couldn't say "no." Peter left all and followed. No doubt, he didn't fully understand all that Jesus would do. How could he know how this would transform and shape his life? He just knew that Jesus was calling to him.

Peter invites you to hear the call of Jesus also. Jesus calls to you as you live your life. Jesus speaks to you through His Word. He reaches out to you imploring you to follow too. You may not know how this will transform and shape your life. You may not fully understand all that Jesus does for you. But Jesus calls.

You cannot come to Jesus on your own, neither could Peter. Jesus comes to you. He seeks you out amid your sins. He calls to you through mercy and forgiveness. As Peter, just follow. Go where Jesus is found: in His Word, Baptism, and the Supper. Receive Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Just follow.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Jesus to call Peter. Jesus calls me to follow also. Grant me to seek Jesus where He is found and receive Him continually for the forgiveness of my sins. In His Name. Amen.

February 19

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. – Mark 1.21

Not so unusual. Jesus goes to the synagogue and teaches on the Sabbath. That's what the rabbis and faithful would do. That's what Jesus did, He wants to be in church and delights in the Word of God. But Peter loves action.

Immediately there was a man with an unclean spirit! In the synagogue? Yep, right in the midst of those who came for worship there was this man with an unclean spirit. Jesus comes into contact with the unclean! What will happen? Usually, the unclean infects the clean, will Jesus be unclean?

Amazingly, the demon knows exactly who Jesus is! And Jesus drives out the demon with a few words. The demon listens and leaves! This is the power of the Word of God. Jesus teaches and demons flee. Jesus speaks and sins are forgiven. The sermons of Jesus contain action and power.

This power is still there. In the midst of the Divine Service Jesus still speaks. Demons flee and sinners are forgiven. Jesus delights in worship! So come and receive. The devil and demons hate it when you hear Jesus. The evil one despises you for repenting of sin and receiving Jesus. So come and hear Jesus. Be forgiven. Drive the evil one far from you. The Words of Jesus are power and action!

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son drove out demons with His powerful Word. Bring Your Word to me that the evil one would have no power over me. Forgive me and keep me in Your Kingdom eternally. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 20

And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. – Mark 1.29

No time to rest. Immediately, they go the home of Simon and Andrew. Peter's mother-in-law was sick so Jesus heals her. She gets up and begins serving them. This is how the life of the Christian goes.

For those who are sick in sin there is no opportunity to serve God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. When Jesus comes and forgives, the Christian begins serving. The Gospel, what Jesus does for us, transforms our lives. No longer do we live under the curse of

sin, but in joyful service to those around us. Just like Peter's mother-in-law we want to serve others.

God does not need your service. What could you do for God that He couldn't do for Himself, and much better? But your neighbor needs your service. Since Jesus has served you, so you serve. Peter includes this healing to show us how we are to live.

His mother-in-law served because she was served by Jesus. She didn't have to, but wanted to. You who have been served by Jesus serve those around you, not because God demands it, but because you want to. Because you have been served by God.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to serve me through His death on the cross. Grant me to serve those around me in thanksgiving for all You have done for me. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 21

But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter. – Mark 1.45

The action continues as a leper comes right up to Jesus and implores Jesus to cleanse him. Of course, Jesus does. But imagine the nerve of that leper! Leprosy was seen as a very contagious disease. Lepers were not encouraged to be around the healthy. Usually this would make the healthy unclean, but Jesus does not become unclean. Jesus drives away any uncleanness.

Jesus told the leper, now healed, to tell no one. But the man couldn't contain himself. He went out and told everyone he could. Who wouldn't tell everyone what Jesus had done? This man couldn't keep quiet.

Jesus told him to be quiet because this was not the primary reason Jesus came. He came to give His life on the cross and die for sinners. Healing a leper was wonderful, but how much better that Jesus would die for that man's sins!

Peter invites us to take a cue from this leper. We should be so bold as to come right to Jesus with our sins. "If you will, you can make me clean." We should be so confident to know that Jesus will. He

will heal us from our sins and grant us new life in Him. Be that bold and confident. Come to the Divine Service and receive the blessings Jesus gives.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son healed lepers. Jesus is for me in the Divine Service. Grant me to receive Him for the forgiveness of my sins. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 22

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." - Mark 2.5

Imagine the scene. Crowds pressing around Jesus in a home. No way to get near Him. Jesus was speaking and teaching the Word with one mass of humanity all wanting Jesus and hanging on every word. Then the roof tiles begin to be removed! Why! Then a bed with a man begins to descend toward Jesus. Who would have thought of such a thing?

The friends of this man knew that Jesus could heal their paralyzed friend. They knew that Jesus was the only way. They were willing to climb on the roof and hoist their friend up and then down through the ceiling. They knew Jesus would help and saved.

Jesus does! "My son, your sins are forgiven (Mark 2.5)." The man had what he needed; just Jesus! But Jesus gives more. As proof that He could forgive sins Jesus heals the man also. The people were amazed.

We should be just that amazed at Jesus. That He would come to us through Word and Sacrament and forgive our sins. We need not be lowered through the roof, but we can come to Jesus where He is for us. He comes to give us what we need; just Jesus.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son forgave the paralytic. Forgive me also that I would rejoice in Your mercy and goodness. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 23

And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. - Mark 2.14

Would Jesus dare to call a sinner to follow Him? Levi was a sinner. Tax collectors were synonymous with sinners in the first century. And there was Levi collecting taxes, or as the people around him would have seen it, sinning.

Jesus goes right up to this sinner and calls him to follow. And just as simply, Levi does. There is no talk from Levi about where they are going or what Levi needs to take care of before following; Levi just follows.

Jesus came to call sinners. Jesus comes to call sinners. He calls you to follow Him. Make no excuses, Levi didn't, but follow. He calls you to drown all your sins through Baptism, so be Baptized and draw upon the flood of grace daily. He calls you to hear His Word like sheep hearing a shepherd, so hear. He calls you to receive Him in the Supper, so receive. Jesus comes to call sinners, of whom you are one.

Jesus does all the work, so let Him. He calls, He forgives, He gives life, He saves. You need but receive. Follow to where Jesus is found. He is there in the Divine Service for sinners. Gather and receive.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to call sinners. Jesus comes to me and calls me to follow. Grant that I receive Jesus through Word and Sacrament, that I would follow Him. In His Name. Amen.

February 24

And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." – Mark 2.27

The Sabbath was the day of rest. It was a day to contemplate what God had done and was doing for His people. This rest and honor of the Sabbath came from the first week when God rested from the work of creating. But God does not tire, nor is He prideful in His work, so why would God need to rest?

Creation is joined to redemption here on the seventh day. The rest of God in creating is joined to the rest of God in redeeming. Jesus rests dead in the tomb on the seventh day. This day is made for man. It points the Old Testament people to what Jesus would do for them on the cross and by His rest in the tomb. It points them to the resurrection from the dead on the day beyond the seventh.

On the eighth day, Sunday, Jesus bursts forth from the tomb. He overturns sin and death. What need has man of laws around laws? Picking so many grains or walking so many steps? The Sabbath is about what God does for man, not what man does for God. The Father sends His Son to die and save sinners. The focus of sinners should be on that Jesus does on that Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. These days were made for you, for Jesus to do His work and save you.

Prayer: Father, by Your will this world was made. You point us to what Your Son would do for us on the cross by Your rest on the seventh day. Recreate me, through Jesus, and save me from my sins. In His Name. Amen.

February 25

And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. – Mark 3.2

They were in the synagogue. They should have been worshipping. They should have been listening to the Word of the Lord. But they were paying close attention to Jesus. They were hoping He would break their law and heal a man. They were waiting to be offended by Jesus having mercy.

They were not disappointed. Jesus had mercy. He healed the man with the withered hand. They knew that Jesus was full of compassion and they hated Him for it.

Jesus is full of compassion. Sinners may hate Him for it, but God does not change to fit the expectations of sinners. Jesus comes to heal and save, no matter what sinners think of Him. On the day of worship, Jesus seeks to forgive. He comes with His gracious presence as He did for that man with the withered hand. He comes to you seeking not to heal your hand but your whole self.

Jesus comes to you through the Divine Service and offers Himself. He speaks to cleanse your sins. He drowns your sins through your Baptism into Him. He feeds you with His body and blood. Let others think what they will, but you come and receive.

Prayer: Father, I thank You that You send Jesus to me. Forgive me through all He has done for me and grant me life eternal. In His Name. Amen.

February 26

“For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” - Mark 3.35

Perhaps an odd thing for Jesus to say. When told his mother and brothers were outside, He said, “For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” But this is a reminder, first, of who is Jesus.

Jesus does the will of the Father. All He does is of the Father. Jesus worships, following that will perfectly. Thus it is that whoever does His will is his brother and sister and mother.

Doing the will of God makes you worship as Jesus worshiped. To do the will of God means that you will be holy as God is holy. But how can this be since you are a sinner? You sin daily against God and man, how can you be holy? It is the will of God that none be lost but all come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

So come to Jesus. Is this not the will of the Father? Come and be saved through His death. Receive Him through Word and Baptism and Supper. Be holy through the forgiveness of your sins. The Father counts you as His perfect child through Jesus. Is this not the will of the Father, that He would lose none, not even you? So come and receive Jesus, you are a part of His family.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son made me a part of His family through my Baptism into Him. Strengthen my faith that nothing would take me from You. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

February 27

And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” - Mark 4.13

Either they get it or they don't. There is no middle ground in the parables, there is no multiplicity of interpretation. There is only one

right interpretation and the disciples don't understand. Do you? Do you know the key that unlocks all the parables?

It is easy to read the parables with ourselves at the center. Who else could be the good Samaritan or the lump of good yeast working through the dough or farmer sowing seeds? To put ourselves at the center feels natural. Jesus is telling me to help my neighbor or spread the Word! Nothing wrong with those concepts, but you are not the key to the parables.

Jesus is the key. The parables, all of them, have Himself at the center. He is the farmer going out to sow His Word in sinners. He makes the crop. He is the good Samaritan picking you who are dead in sins up. He is the yeast working into your dead self to give you life. The parables show us who Jesus is and what He does for us.

The disciples didn't understand. They got lost in themselves or the earthly analogies Jesus used. But you understand. Find Jesus in each parable. Find Him giving Himself to save you from your sins. He does it, you receive.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You give Your Son for me. Grant me to see Him and what He does for me through His parables that I would know Your goodness. In His Name. Amen.

February 28

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground." - Mark 4.26

A man scatters seeds, he sleeps and rises, the seed grows- who knows how? What a parable! Not about us spreading the Word. But this is all about Jesus. He spreads the Word and causes growth. Who can say how this happens. Where did the three thousand on Pentecost come from? They were baptized into Jesus. What about the jailer in Philippi? Paul and Silas were in jail and after an earthquake the jailer asked to be Baptized, he and his whole household. What about all the churches that sprang up wherever Paul went?

The seed is scattered, the Word is given, and there is growth. Christians are made in Christ. He comes and grants forgiveness and

life. How can this be? Life happens where there was only sin and death. Men know not how.

Growth is given through the sanctified life. As believers remain connected to their Savior they grow in faith. They learn of Him who died for them. They follow His will and find good to do in family, church, and community. How can this be? They know not how.

Even in death there is life. Those who live and believe in Jesus shall not die but live. Life and life abundantly is granted. Eternal life secured. How? There is only one answer, through Jesus. He gives and grants growth. Life springs from death at His powerful Word. Trust in Him. He does all things well.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son has rescued me from death and the power of the devil. As I live in His kingdom He grant me growth of faith. I thank You for all You do for me through Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

February 29

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. – Mark 4.39

Over the chaos of the sea and amid certain death, Jesus speaks. The disciples may feel out of control, but Jesus is in full control. The wind and waves obey Him; there is no death in Him.

Amid an out-of-control world where sin rages, Jesus is in control. He speaks. He declares that your sins forgiven. He ends the rule of death. He breaks the devil's hold over you. He grants you peace that passes all understanding.

How could a sinner have peace in this world? How could a sinner have peace with God? Only because Jesus speaks. The power of His Word grants you forgiveness. Amid the chaos of your sins He grants you recreation. You are remade in His image through your Baptism. You are forgiven and given life.

This life is yours forever more. He is the Lord of life, not death. For you in Jesus there is no death and no condemnation- just life. The disciples found this out sitting in that boat being swamped by waves and pummeled by wind. You found this out as Jesus washed you clean through Baptism and spoke His Word to you. You know

He has rescued you from the chaos of sin. He is Jesus, His Word brings peace.

Prayer: Father, I thank You that Jesus speaks me clean of my sin. Amid the chaos of this world grant me to hold fast to His saving death. In His Name. Amen.

March 1

For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" - Mark 5.8

The contest between God and evil continues. Wherever Jesus goes it seem the forces of evil gather. They test and try Him. Is He really strong enough to defeat them? Is He really God?

They know He is God. The demons absolutely know that Jesus is God. They have known Him since their creation and even robed in flesh they recognize God. But they cannot fathom what Jesus is doing in flesh. Why would God take on flesh? What is Jesus doing?

They cannot comprehend that Jesus loves sinners. He wants more than to rule and control the world. He wants to have a relationship with sinners. He loves them and wants to save sinners from their sins that they would be with Him eternally.

That's not the way the demons think. They hate mankind. Was it not the devil who tempted Adam and Eve? Do the demons not do all they can to hinder man from faith? Even here in Mark 5, the legion have taken control of this man, ruining his life. They have no desire to love mankind- they cannot fathom it.

There is no contest. Jesus drives the legion away with a few words, they must obey. The love of Jesus for mankind leads Him on to do more than drive out demons, Jesus travels on to the cross. Here is the ultimate act of love toward sinners. Jesus takes on the sins of sinners and pays the full price for them. He rescues sinners from the kingdom of the evil one. He still comes to you, in love, to have a relationship with you through His Word. He drives the evil one far from you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, in love, You sent Your Son to rescue sinners. Apply the death that Jesus died to me that I would be saved from the evil one. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 2

But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” - Mark 5.36

Did Jesus really say, “Do not fear”? How could He say that? This situation is filled with fear and dread. The man’s daughter is believed to be dead. If the crowd is to be believed, she had stopped breathing, she was dead. How could the man not fear?

There is no fear in Jesus. He casts out fear. He is God. He is all knowing and all powerful. Since He knows all things, He knows what is best for each of us. Since He is all powerful, He is able to create any outcome He desires. We need only to trust, and we would not fear.

But we are sinful. It is easy to trust in anything but God. Thus, so often we fear. So only believe. Believe that Jesus is God and loves you. He proves His love as He rose that little girl. He proves His love as He dies for your sins. He shows His love as He comes to you through Word and Sacrament. He gives you all things. You need not fear, only believe!

Trust He love out poured for you. Amid the storms of life, trust in Him. During the lowest points of life, trust in Him. Jesus knows what you are going through, He never leaves you. Fear not, only believe.

Prayer: Father, grant me to not fear, but only believe and trust in all that Jesus has done for me. Grant me to receive Him through Word and Sacrament that I would always be confident in His love. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 3

And they all ate and were satisfied. – Mark 6.42

Jesus had been trying to get away from the crowds for a little while. But the crowds kept following and Jesus kept having compassion on

them. He began to teach them many things, but the disciples want all this to end, “Send them away.”

It seems like the disciples had not really been watching Jesus. He always had time to teach the people who came. It was His delight to teach them about the Word of the Lord. If the disciples realized this, they would never have asked Jesus to send the people away. And when Jesus tells them to give the people something to eat, He invites them to teach also.

But the disciples don’t understand. Jesus feeds them all. Not with a little bread and fish, but with the Word. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God. The crowd could go home satisfied, being fed on the Word of the Lord.

Is God’s Word enough for you? Do you delight to come to worship and hear His voice? Do you rejoice to listen? Have you nothing, not one thing, better to do? As the disciples we need to repent of putting other things before the Word of the Lord. Repent. Hear the Word of Jesus forgiving and speaking of all He has done for you. Be satisfied.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to give the Word and teach. Grant me to listen to His voice and follow where He leads that I would be satisfied. In His Name. Amen.

March 4

For they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” - Mark 6.50

Terror filled the disciples when they saw Jesus. Does that sound right? Should Jesus inspire such dread and fear? When we think of Jesus walking around in Galilee during His ministry we don’t think of Him spreading terror. He looked like any other man. He had emotions and felt pain. He struggled like any human. Its easy to forget that He is true God.

When sinners come into contact with God they should be terrified. How can sinners stand before a holy God? Jesus should inspire such fear, but masked in humanity He conceals His divine powers so when the disciples are afraid it shocks us.

Jesus walked to them on the water, in the night. They were afraid because this was something unhuman. They should have been afraid to be in the presence of God, but they were not. This speaks to who God is. He is merciful and loving to let sinners come into His presence. He invites us to come before Him. He offers Himself through Word and Sacrament. Jesus desires to come to you, that you would not fear, but take heart. He comes to forgive and save.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son is true God and true man. He offered Himself on the cross to pay for my sins and so my sins are forgiven. Grant me to rejoice to come into the presence of Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

March 5

And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone. – Mark 7.30

Not the typical interaction between Jesus and a sinner. Usually, when sinners come to Jesus, imploring Him for help, He helps them immediately. But here, Jesus puts this woman off. Jesus insults the woman saying, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs (Mark 7.27).”

Jesus calls her a dog, unworthy to receive His help. How insulting! But this woman won’t be deterred. She keeps begging Jesus. Even dogs get some crumbs. All she wants is a little help, not much. Just a little bit of Jesus is enough for her. She knows that Jesus can help her and she trusts that He will.

Jesus does as she asks and heals her daughter. Jesus puts this woman off to show the disciples and us what faith looks like. Faith keeps trusting in Jesus no matter what. Even if it seems that Jesus isn’t listening or doesn’t care, faith trusts. Even if all that our senses tell us seem to show that there is no help coming, faith trusts. Faith does not waver, but relies on Jesus no matter what.

Faith like this doesn’t just happen by accident. It is built up over time. As one reads the Word and studies, as one prays, and suffers faith is strengthened. The Christian learns and experiences that Jesus

is merciful and loving. He will answer, in His way, in His time. Faith just trusts Jesus.

Prayer: Father, Jesus is loving and merciful. Grant me to trust Him as that woman did. Build my faith through Word and prayer, that nothing would take me from my Savior. In His Name. Amen.

March 6

And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." - Mark 8.29

Perhaps it's no surprise that Peter gets this correct. He is the one telling what happened, after all. We might assume that Peter includes this to make himself look good, but this is not so. Peter gets this right, but also wrong. He knows that Jesus is the Christ, but Peter does not understand what the Christ must do. Peter gets this only half right.

Jesus is the Christ. But Peter wants an earthly king. He wants someone to drive out the Roman occupiers and make a new, glorious, Israel. But Jesus has not come to be an earthly king. He has not come to drive out nations or create countries. Jesus has come to suffer, die, and rise again.

Jesus came to be exalted, but on the cross. He has come to be glorified, but that glory is found only in His suffering. Peter doesn't realize it, but that is what sinners need. Only through Jesus' suffering and death are sins forgiven.

To confess Jesus as the Christ requires knowing who Jesus is and what He came to do. He is true God and true man who came to offer His perfect life on the cross for the salvation of sinners. Let us then, with boldness, confess Jesus, the Christ.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to be lifted up in glory and die for the sins of sinners. I thank you that Jesus did all this for me. Grant me to confess all that Jesus did. In His Name. Amen.

March 7

And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. - Mark 9.8

Jesus teaches the disciples and us something very valuable through His transfiguration. It's amazing! He is transfigured before the disciples on that mountain. Moses and Elijah join Jesus speaking about what was going to happen. The disciples were clueless about what to do, maybe build three shelters?

It might seem that the lesson is that Jesus is all powerful. But for sinners that doesn't help. God is all powerful, to punish sinners for their sins. God's power belongs to the law. Maybe this is that Jesus is a prophet like Moses or Elijah. But Jesus is much more. Perhaps Moses represents the law and Elijah the prophets, Jesus fulfills the Old Testament?

Jesus does fulfill the Old Testament, but that is not the point here. Moses and Elijah were Messianic figures. They point to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah- the one anointed to take the sins of sinners away. And this whole account comes to a climax when the voice, cloud, Moses, and Elijah are gone. Here is the important thing: the disciples are left with Jesus only. That is the only thing one needs for salvation.

We need not a transfigured Jesus, shining in glory. But we need the Jesus who is clothed in humanity traveling on to the cross to die for our sins. We need the crucified Jesus. Jesus only.

Prayer: Father, You give me Jesus only and that is enough for me. I thank you for all You do for me through my Savior. In His Name. Amen.

March 8

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" - Mark 10.17

Not a good idea to ask Jesus a law question. This question is centered in what this man can do. What can man do under the law? Be holy as God is holy. The law never, ever, excuses, sin. The law demands total perfection every second of one's life. The law always accuses sinners of their sins.

The way Jesus answers law questions is with more law. He tries to get sinners to understand their sin under the law. What can this man do? He can be perfect. He can remember that he is not good, only God is good. He must keep every commandment. But in pride, this man thinks he is good; he has kept all the commandments. So Jesus gives him something he won't do- sell all he has. The man won't sell all he has.

Jesus takes this man to the mirror of the law. The realization that we cannot keep the law. The law reflects our sins back to us, showing us that we are sinful. We can't save ourselves- what can we do? Nothing. The law always accuses you of your sin.

So listen to the law. And realize you are sinful. The more we understand our sins under the law the sweeter the Gospel becomes. How many sinners cried out to Jesus? They offered nothing for they knew they had nothing. But Jesus heard and forgave. So cry out to Jesus. Not asking what you must do, but begging Him to act for you. He does. He dies in your place. He forgives you freely. You are saved by His grace.

Prayer: Father, grant me to see my sins and know that I am unworthy of Your mercy. Forgive me through Jesus and grant me eternal life. In His Name. Amen.

March 9

And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." - Mark 10.37

James and John have no idea what they ask. They want to sit on either side of Jesus when Jesus comes into His glory. They think they are asking to be princes when Jesus becomes an earthly king. They think they are getting ahead of the other disciples and getting a better spot in Jesus' kingdom. They think they are clever and smart.

But James and John don't know what they are asking. Jesus has not come to rule an earthly kingdom and have princes under Him. His glory is not the sort that most would assume. The glory of Jesus is found as He dies on the cross. Here Jesus is King and brings the fullness of His kingdom. James and John are asking to be hung on crosses next to Jesus.

Jesus will complete His mission on His own. He is the only one who can pay for the sins of the world. James and John cannot help. They will not be on His right or left. Rather, they must serve others. James and John need to understand that Jesus came to serve, not to be served. They also should seek to serve, not be princes in some kingdom.

This is the way of the Christian. We follow Jesus in serving others. Jesus did not seek earthly fame or fortune, but was content to help sinners. He was content to lay down His life on the cross. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant.

Prayer: Father, Your Son came to serve. He serves me through His death on the tree. Grant me to joyfully serve others that I would reflect the love of Jesus in my life. In His Name. Amen.

March 10

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" - Mark 10.47

The blind man cries out. He was sitting by the roadside begging. He has it down well for that's what he does. He begs, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" What does he want? What is this mercy? Does he want to talk to Jesus or have Jesus heal him? Would he desire his sins forgiven? Maybe he just wants to be with Jesus for a moment.

Of course, the crowd demands that he be quiet. How inappropriate for him to cry out. But Bartimaeus won't be quiet. He wants mercy, he demands Jesus. He gets what he wants. Jesus calls to him and asks what this blind man wants.

Bartimaeus wants to see. And Jesus gives the man his sight. But that is not the important thing here. The important thing is what happens next- Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way.

This is an invitation and reminder for Christians. When Bartimaeus came into contact with Jesus, he could not help but follow Jesus. Into Jerusalem they went on Palm Sunday. Was Bartimaeus there to hear Jesus teach in the Temple throughout holy week? Was he there on Friday to see Jesus die. Was he still in the city Sunday to hear the amazing news?

The blind man who could see followed. You follow too. You have seen the goodness and mercy of Jesus. Has He not died for your sin and rose on the third day to give you confidence that your sins are forgiven? Has He not washed your sins away and forgiven them all. Does He not give you every blessing? So follow like Bartimaeus. Seek Jesus where He is, in Word and Sacrament. Be in His presence constantly.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son gave sight to Bartimaeus. Jesus gives me the forgiveness of my sins. Grant that I follow Jesus continually. In His Name. Amen.

March 11

And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" - Mark 11.9

There can be no question what this looks like. Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The people rejoice before Him. They all know exactly what this is. It is a coronation!

Solomon rode a donkey when he was crowned king, as commanded by David, his father (1 Kings 1.33). The people knew this and as Jesus rides a donkey, they know what it means- He is the King! They want a king, just like Solomon. Under the rule of Solomon there was a time of peace, and even more, Israel was a one of the strongest nations.

But Jesus does not do the expected. He does not drive out the Romans. He does not try to be an earthly king. All of this excitement and hope seems to be wasted. But Jesus is teaching the crowd that this is not coronation day. They have just a few days to wait for that day.

Jesus had not come to be an earthly king. He had come to die on a tree and save sinners from eternal death. Jesus will be led through the city, carrying His own cross. The crowd will cry out, "Crucify Him!"

Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord. Jesus comes, covered in the Name of the Lord. He comes to the tree to die for you. There is no question what this looks like; God loving you to send His Son to die for your sins.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to die for my sins. Grant me to rejoice as Jesus comes to me through humble means-Word, water, bread and wine. That I would always receive Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

March 12

Have you not read this Scripture: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” - Mark 12.10

A vineyard owner doing all he can for the vineyard. Of course he would clear it of stones and build a hedge and watch tower. Should he go away, he would leave tenants in charge. But the vineyard is still his, he would send stewards to receive the fruits of the vineyard. But here is where the parable takes a twist. The tenants beat those sent from the master. They kill the master’s son assuming the master was dead and that the vineyard would be theirs.

Jesus’ parable is pointed. The Israelites were the tenants who had beat the prophets and now the Son is there, what would they do to Him? They would reject Him, as they had the prophets, and they would kill Him. Jesus would be the stone rejected.

But this is marvelous in our eyes. The rejection of Jesus is marvelous to sinners. The Father willed that His Son could come to the tenants. The Father knew what would happen, but still sent His Son. The tenants crucified the Son; how marvelous. As the Son dies your salvation is accomplished.

For the worthless tenants, those who sin and sin, the Son dies. Jesus is rejected and dies for you. Let this be marvelous in your eyes. Come and receive what Jesus has done for you. Work in His vineyard, not as a worthless tenant, but as His brother or sister.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to die for me. Grant me to rejoice to serve You in Your kingdom daily as I help my neighbor. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 13

And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” - Mark 13.2

The second Temple was an amazing building. Not as marvelous as Solomon's Temple, but still remarkable. Rebuilt under the rule of Cyrus during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah it was a testament to the mercy of God. Amid the apostasy of the people of Judah, God permitted Babylon to destroy the first Temple. God used Cyrus to bring His people back to their land and rebuild the Temple.

But this marvelous Temple was nothing compared to the true Temple. There was another Temple, not made with human hands. This was the true place where God dwelt in mercy. Jesus hints at this as someone remarked about the great building saying, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

The second Temple would be destroyed by Rome in 70 AD, but this was not what Jesus was talking about. Jesus speaks of Himself, He is the true Temple. He will be torn down in death. The true Temple, the dwelling place of God Most High, would be sacrificed for the sins of sinners. He would cover their apostasy with His blood.

But this is personal. Jesus died not just for them, but for you. For your sins against God, Jesus died. For all the times you betrayed Him with your words or sinned against Him with your actions, He died. He was torn down for you that you would have peace with God.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to be torn down to death for me. I confess before You that I am not worthy of Your mercy. Forgive me and grant me to be faithful. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 14

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. – Mark 13.26

What is Jesus talking about here? He speaks of His second coming. He will come back to judge the living and the dead. All will see Him come back again in power (Revelation 1.7). At His command He will raise all the dead and grant new resurrected bodies to all. This will be a day of great joy for those who trust in Him, but a terrible day for those who have rejected Him.

But this is not all. Jesus speaks of another day in this text too. This day also will be one of great joy for believers. Since His birth Jesus has been traveling on toward this day. Quicker and quicker in the Gospel it seems to come. It is inescapable for the Father wills Jesus to this day.

On that day Jesus will be lifted up. He will be coming in the clouds and presented to the ancient of days (like Daniel saw; Daniel 7.13-14). Jesus would be lifted up with great power and glory. It would not look like this to those standing by, but in those moments God was revealed.

On Good Friday this happened. The power and glory of God were revealed there, as nowhere else. God's power was seen as Jesus took the sins of all sinners on Himself. Jesus was transfigured into your sin, for you. God's glory was revealed as all the promises of God were kept there at the tree. They, those disciples, would see this.

But not just them, you would see it too. You would see Jesus coming to you through Word and Sacrament. He brings you the benefits of His death. See it? See His mercy out poured in the Word. See His grace give in the Supper. Jesus comes to you to forgive and recreate even you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, Your Son was raised up in glory and power. He died to forgive my sins. Cover me with His blood and forgive me that when He comes again I would rejoice. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 15

And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." - Mark 14.18

Who would dare to betray their Master? And on Passover! But Jesus knows exactly where He is going and how He would get there. He would be betrayed just like Joseph of old. Just a little silver is all it took to sell the Christ. His life meant that little! Like a lamb He would be led to the slaughter.

Perhaps even more surprising the disciples all seem guilty. They all are sorrowful and ask, "Is it I?" Jesus is betrayed by only one, but He

goes for all. All are guilty before God. Each one should receive the answer, “Yes, you betrayed the Christ with each sin.”

You betrayed Him. You were not there in the upper room, not did you sell Him for silver. But you have sinned against Him time and again. With each sin you betrayed your creator. You broke His law and despised Him. What should God do to you?

He dies in your place. Betrayed and despised Jesus goes to the tree for you. He suffers your punishment on the tree. He drinks down the cup of wrath that should have been yours. He grants you forgiveness.

He still comes to eat with you. He comes to you, in mercy, with His body and blood. He forgives you through the blood He shed in your place. Taste and see how good He is!

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to die in my place. I confess before You the many times I have sinned. Have mercy on me for the sake of Jesus. Forgive me. In His Name. Amen.

March 16

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” - Mark 14.22

So rarely in Mark’s Gospel is Jesus still. Usually, Jesus is on the move doing amazing things. This moment must be important! Jesus, in the middle of the Passover celebration, takes bread, “Take; this is my body.” He also takes the cup of wine saying, “This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many.” This is important and Mark wants us to take note.

The disciples are still too. They just receive. They do nothing to earn this gift of Jesus. Jesus gives. The one who has driven out demons, calmed seas, healed multitudes, fed thousands, and raised the dead gives more. He gives Himself for sinners to eat and drink.

Mark invites you to this meal. This is not just for the disciples, but for many, for you. Jesus gives Himself to you. He offers you His body and blood that you would eat and drink. But why? Why would Jesus do this?

Jesus does this that you would receive the benefits of His death on the cross. As He dies He pays completely for all your sins. You

receive this through His Supper. He offers you Himself for the forgiveness of your sins. Thus, be still and receive.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son on to the tree for me. Grant me joy in receiving Jesus in the Supper that my sins would be forgiven through His death. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 17

And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." – Mark 14.24

A new covenant Jesus makes with sinners. The old covenant, of the law, was broken by the people of Israel continually. They were sent judges and prophets to keep them on the narrow way, but they refused to listen. Now the Son has arrived to bring a new covenant.

No one could keep the old covenant. The law demands perfection in all one's life. Who can live up to that standard? Who can curb thoughts and actions every day, all the time? The law condemns all alike. We are sinners, this much is true.

A new covenant is needed for us who have broken the law of God. Jesus brings that covenant. It is cut with His own blood on the tree. God makes peace between Himself and sinners by placing the sins of all on His Son. Jesus pays the full price for all our sins. Through Jesus we are forgiven.

This covenant is Gospel. God does all the work. He pays for your sins. He declares you forgiven. He washes you clean. He feeds and nourishes you. He does all. You just receive. So live in this covenant. Receive what Jesus has done for you. Hear the Word. Drown your sins in your Baptismal grace. Receive His body and blood. A wonderful covenant this is for sinners!

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to make a new covenant. He did so through His death on the tree. Forgive me through Jesus and grant me to live as Your dear child. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 18

And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. – Mark 14.33

Jesus is greatly distressed and troubled. He knows what is about to come. Jesus prays in the garden that if possible, the cup of suffering would be removed from Him. But it is not possible, there is no other way to save sinners.

While Peter, James, and John sleep, Jesus prepares for what is coming. Judas soon comes and Jesus would be seized like a robber. He would go as the Father willed.

For these moments Jesus had come. This was the reason for all those promises of the Messiah to the people in the Old Testament. Jesus' moment to overturn the might of the evil one was almost at hand. Through Jesus, as was promised to Abram, all people would be blessed. Jesus is new the Moses, who rescues His people from sin and death and leads them to the promised land. But there is a steep price to be paid before the Father.

Jesus knows what that price is- His death on the tree. Even more, He knows, that the Father would put on Him the sins of all and punish Him in the place of every sinner. Jesus, who knew no sin, would become our sin. He, who was holy, would be punished for the sins of all.

Jesus is distressed and troubled, but goes as a lamb uncomplaining forth. He travels on with hapless disciples. He will be arrested by sinners and tried. He would be hung on the tree. His love for you pushes Him on to die.

Prayer: Father, You sent Jesus to die for my sins. I praise and thank You for all that Jesus has done for me. Grant me to live as Your child. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 19

And they all left him and fled. – Mark 14:50

The shepherd is struck and what can the sheep do? The sheep flee. Jesus remains alone. This is the way it must be. Jesus, and He alone, must endure the trial and mockery. He must suffer the beating and flogging. He alone must be hung on a tree, nailed hand and foot. There is no one to help.

What could you do? There's not a thing you could do to help Jesus. He does all the work of your salvation. You do nothing. There was nothing for Peter or James to do. Not John nor Mary could help. Jesus does this alone as proof that we have no part to play in our salvation.

And so it is, Jesus hangs alone. He dies for all, for you. He does all the work. He pays completely for your sins. What can you do? The only thing you can do is receive what Jesus has done. He offers you the benefits of His death through your Baptism into Him. He gives you forgiveness and life. He gives and you receive.

You have received. You are forgiven. So live as you are His own dear child. You are not your own, but you were bought with a great price. You have been given people around you. Your Lord put you in a community that you would love and serve your neighbor. There is where your thanksgiving is directed, to those around you. Jesus has loved you, so you love. There is nothing we can do to aid in our salvation, but in thanksgiving for all Jesus has done we joyfully love our neighbor.

Prayer: Father, You sent Jesus to accomplish my salvation and He forgives me freely. Grant me to respond to all He has done in love for those around me. Use me to show forth the love of Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

March 20

And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need?" - Mark 14.63

Fitting for sinners, isn't it? It was God who established the priesthood to bring forgiveness to His people. Now the high priest condemns God to die. Sinners take the things of God and twist them.

Sinners don't change and neither does God. He continues to use the High Priest, amid his sin, to bring forgiveness. All happens according to the plan and purpose of the Father. As the High Priest condemns Jesus to die little does he know that Jesus brings forgiveness to all through His death.

Jesus humbles Himself to be condemned by sinners. He humbles Himself to take the sins of sinners on Himself and travel to the cross. Jesus is the true High Priest who offers the sacrifice for sins; the sacrifice of Himself.

For sinners like the High Priest, Jesus dies. For a sinner like you, Jesus dies too. For all your sins and faults before God and man, Jesus dies for you. You were in the mind of Jesus while He was being condemned and crucified. Jesus goes to the tree for sinners; He goes to the tree for you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You sent Your Son on to die for my sins. Forgive me all my sins and cover them with the blood of Jesus shed for me on the tree. Strengthen my faith in all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

March 21

And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept. – Mark 14.72

How could Peter betray Jesus like this? After all, Peter had been with Jesus for three years. He had seen all the miracles that Jesus had done. He had heard all the sermons too. He had been there with Jesus and every time Peter failed Jesus had been there for him. But now Peter denies Jesus. How could Peter not weep.

How then can you not weep over your sins? Are you any better than Peter? Have you not seen what Jesus has done in your life? Have you not heard His Words? Yet, you sin against Him day after day. Where are your tears over your sins?

Sinners often think so little of sins. Rarely are we moved to tears over what we have done, said, or thought. We know that Jesus must excuse them or that our sins aren't really that bad.

Your sins are that bad and worse. Just as bad as Peter denying Jesus are each of your sins. Should you see Jesus looking at you would He approve or your sins?

Sinners should weep over their sins for there is nothing else we can do. Jesus does all the work. He goes to the tree for sinners like Peter

and you. He lays down His life in payment and offer forgiveness freely. He turns our tears over sin to joy through His love and mercy.

Prayer: Father, I am a sinner before You. Many of my sins I know, some I don't. I implore You to forgive me through all that Jesus has done for me. In His Name. Amen.

March 22

And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." - Mark 15.2

Can Pilate make any sense of this? If this Jesus is the King of the Jews, why would His own people arrest Him and want Him crucified? If Jesus is the King of the Jews wouldn't the Jews try to make Him King and not kill Him? If Jesus is the King of the Jews, shouldn't He act like it? Shouldn't He be leading a military rebellion? But none of these things are true. How can Jesus be the King?

Jesus is a King, but He does not do what an earthly king would do. He does not lead a military rebellion, nor does He seek the throne of Pilate or Herod or Caesar. Instead, the throne of Jesus is a cross. He stands before Pilate ready to die as the King of the Jews.

Jesus is crowned with thorns, robed in our sins, hated by all, and condemned to die. As King He dies for sinners, the worst offenders. What earthly king would ever do anything like that? As King, Jesus defeats sin, overturns death, and destroys the might of the devil.

The King rules over all things in power. He controls the kingdoms and preserves the earth. Jesus rules over His church in grace. He forgives the sins of sinners. He grants eternal life to those who don't deserve it. And as King He rules over the saints triumphant in glory.

Pilate could not understand nor see that the King was standing before Him. It made no sense. That King comes to you to forgive your sins. Receive Him in joy.

Prayer: Father, You Sent Your Son, my King, to die on a cross for me. Grant me to rejoice as Jesus comes to me, as King, to forgive me. In His Name. Amen.

March 23

And they cried out again, "Crucify him." - Mark 15.13

Could this be the same crowd that had, just days before, shouted "Hosannah!?" Are these the same people that Jesus had healed or fed? Had they heard Him preach in the Temple courts? Did they not know Jesus?

This is exactly what sinners need. Sinners need Jesus to go to the cross and die for their sin. They don't know it, but the crowd calls out for exactly what we need. There was no other way to pass over or pass by sin. They had to be dealt with. Either by sinner eternally in hell or by God.

Thus, God enters flesh to deal with the sins of sinners- your sins. He travels on to the cross amid the shouts and jeers. He suffers the pain and mockery for you. He is hung on the tree that the Father would place all your sins on His perfect Son. Jesus takes all sins on Himself and dies in your place. God takes care of your sins.

Now, when God declares your sins forgiven, they are! They are no more because Jesus paid the full price for them on the tree. The crowd calls out for what we need. We rejoice that Jesus has willingly gone to the tree for us. He has taken our sins and granted us His righteousness.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son on to the tree for me. Jesus died for me. Forgive me all my sins through Jesus. In His Name. Amen.

March 24

And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" - Mark 15.18

The Jewish crowds had mocked Jesus and called for His crucifixion. Now the gentile Roman soldiers mock Jesus. It's almost like the whole world is sinful. Jesus came not just for Jews, but for gentiles also. For all those living in darkness, Jesus came.

The whole world was dwelling in darkness. All need Jesus to come. There is no one who is good enough on his or her own. Each have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The mockery of the soldiers reminds us of this sinful fallen world and our need for Jesus.

Jesus is silent before the soldiers. He goes quietly to the tree. For Jews and gentiles alike, Jesus goes to die. For all those who sin, Jesus goes to die. For you, sinner, Jesus dies.

So hail Jesus as your King. He lays down His perfect life in place of your sinful life. He speaks you clean from the tree. He grants you His Word and Supper that you would know the depths of His mercy and love. He forgives you for each of your sins against Him.

Prayer: Father in heaven, amid the mockery of the soldiers Your Son traveled on to the cross for me. Grant me to receive Jesus with great joy as He forgives my sins. In His Name. Amen.

March 25

And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." - Mark 15.26

Mark comes back and back to this, that Jesus is the King. Mark does not want us to miss this in the least. The King heals, calms storms, drives out demons, feeds thousands, and walks on water. The King is always active. Even on the tree the King is active. He dies for the sins of sinners in the greatest miracle ever.

After the crucifixion the King is not done. He continues to work. He is raised from the dead, appears to the disciples, and sends them out. Even after the King ascends bodily in to heaven He does not stop working.

The King is active now. He comes to you through Word and Sacrament. He brings Himself to you. He speaks to you through the Word. He grants you forgiveness by speaking you clean. He comes to you, through Baptism. He washes away your sins. He joins you to Himself in His Supper as you receive His body and blood.

Mark wants to show you that Jesus is your King. He remains active for you. His death still comes to you to forgive you. Jesus still hears your prayers and drives away the evil one from you. Jesus is your King.

Prayer: Father, Jesus worked miracles during His earthly ministry. He is my King still as He comes to me giving me Himself for the

forgiveness of my sins. Grant me to receive Jesus always. In His Name. Amen.

March 26

And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" - Mark 15.29-30

Jesus had said that one stone would not be left upon another. But He had been speaking of a different Temple. The Temple He was speaking about would be rebuilt in three days. When Rome destroyed the temple in Jerusalem it was not rebuilt in three days. When the true Temple was destroyed it was rebuilt in three days.

Jesus knows what is going to happen. He fully understands His mission and purpose. He had given countless clues through the patriarchs, judges, prophets, priests, and kings of Israel. He told and showed the people that He would come to deal with their sin. He would be the true Temple, one not made with human hands. It was His body that would be torn down to death and raised on the third day.

But the people deride Him. They rejected God and His promises. But this shouldn't surprise us. Every sin is a rejection of God and His promises. Every time you sin you treat Jesus as did the crowds. But that is why Jesus came- to take your sins from you.

The true Temple is torn down for you. He takes your sins on you and makes atonement. Here is the Day of Atonement beyond anything the people could imagine; God dying for sinners! Here is the Passover; the Lamb of God shedding His blood for sinners! The promise is for you that you would not die but live eternally.

Prayer: Father, Your Son promised to come for me and He has. He was torn down to death in my place. Grant me to receive Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins. In His Name. Amen.

March 27

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" - Mark 15.34

At the hour of death, Jesus asks “why?”. Why? Why would the Father forsake the Son? Jesus had done everything the Father ever desired of Him. He had taken on flesh and humbled Himself. He was humiliated on the tree, as was the Father’s will. What more could the Son do? Nothing, He had followed perfectly.

And thus, the Son is rejected. In His perfect obedience, Jesus is rejected and forsaken by the Father. This was the Father’s will. It was the only way the salvation of sinners could be accomplished. The Father places the sins of all sinners on Jesus, the beloved Son, and turns His back on Jesus. Jesus drinks down the cup of the Father’s wrath against our sins. The one who knew no sin became our sins.

Why? Not just because this was the Father’s will, but for you. You are the reason Jesus is rejected by the Father on the tree. His suffering under the wrath of the Father is for you; that your sins would be paid for. Jesus does this for you.

Prayer: Father in heaven, You willed that Your Son would be born in flesh and offer that flesh on the tree for me. I praise You that You would love me so much to send Your Son to pay for all my sins. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 28

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. – Mark 15:38

God died. The one who had dwelt in the Holy of Holies, to whom sacrifices were directed, the one who made all things- He died. The temple curtain is torn to show the people what was going on. The sacrifice has been made. Sins have been paid for. The promises of God have been fulfilled.

Not all the blood of beasts could accomplish this, but God’s blood could. No more do High Priests need to offer blood before the Mercy Seat on the Day of Atonement. The sacrifice has been offered, the only one needed. On the mercy seat of the tree Jesus has made payment for sins. Nothing more needs to be done.

Sinners should take note that nothing more needs to be done. Jesus has done all the work. It is finished. There is nothing you need to do, under the law, for your salvation. It been done. Jesus did it all.

Jesus gives you this through your Baptism into Him. He brings the benefits of what He did for you, to you. You are saved. He declares you forgiven and a child of His Father. You are set free from sin and death. So you may serve others. Not out of compulsion by the law, but because you have been so loved by God. He has loved you and forgiven your all your sins, now you may love those around you.

Prayer: Father, Your Son paid the full price for my sins and accomplished my salvation for me. There is nothing I need to do for He has done it all. Grant me to love you and so serve my neighbor. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 29

And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" - Mark 15.39

This centurion had seen it all. Typically, a Roman centurion was tasked with guarding a prisoner. Often these centurions would step in if the other soldiers got too brutal. Rome didn't want criminals to die before their punishment.

This centurion had been with Jesus all the way. He had seen Jesus on trial before Pilate. He had been there for the flogging and mockery. He had witnessed Jesus carry the cross through the streets of Jerusalem. He had been there while Jesus was nailed to the tree. He had seen it all.

Mark invites you to see it all too. Mark records the events of Jesus' life that you would witness it too. You get to read of the baptism of Jesus, His miracles, the transfiguration, that last Passover meal, the arrest, betrayal, and suffering and death of Jesus. You get to see it all too.

That gentile centurion realized who Jesus was. It was not some man suffering and dying, but God; God's Son! The centurion confesses. Mark invites you to confess also. You, who have read what Jesus has done. Confess Him as the Son of God who dies for your sins.

Prayer: Father in heaven, the centurion saw what Jesus did and confessed Him as Your Son. Grant me to confess all that Jesus has done also. Jesus is my Savior who has died for me. In His Name. Amen.

March 30

And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. – Mark 15.46

The Sabbath rest of Jesus demands our attention. Here is why God rested on the seventh day of creation. Here is why the Israelites were directed to rest and worship on the seventh day. Here is the reason Jesus lays dead in the tomb.

Jesus lays dead for you. He fulfills the Sabbath rest. As the Israelites rested on the seventh day they honored the death that Jesus would die. As God rests in creation He reminds us what He would send His Son to die in our place and rest, dead, in a tomb on Saturday.

As the stone rolls against the entrance of the tomb it must have seem so final. In death there is an end of life. Who can defeat death? Who can overturn the power of the grave? There is only one; God. This rest will not be final. Jesus will burst forth from the tomb, alive. Easter is proof that sins were forgiven on Friday. It shows you that your death will not be final.

But for now there is this true Sabbath rest. Jesus died for you. He rests for you. He goes before you the first fruits of those who have died. Through His death and resurrection He grants you beyond the seventh day. He gives you a day of resurrection and life, even the eighth day.

Prayer: Father, Your Son rested in the tomb on the seventh day. For me creation was not enough, I have sinned against You. Through my Baptism You recreate me and grant me life eternal. Thank You. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

March 31

And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. – Mark 16.8

With fear and trembling Mark's Gospel closes. No resurrected Jesus? No disciples going into all nations? Just the women going out in fear and trembling. So what is the point Mark is making?

Mark's point is that the Easter victory is proclaimed each time Christians meet together. Mark's Gospel would have been read in church (all of it) and then the preacher would get up to preach. He would fill in what happened after those women went out. He would preach the resurrection victory!

This victory fills every Divine Service. Each time we meet the victory of Jesus is given. As we confess our sins, we are forgiven through the victory Jesus won on the tree. Each time we hear the Scripture or sing the hymns we proclaim and learn of this victory. Each time we celebrate the Supper we receive this victory of Jesus.

Jesus' victory comes to you time and again. Jesus expects that you would live your whole life in this victory. That it would pervade every aspect of your life and make you look different than the world around you. There is no fear and trembling for you. Jesus has died for you and gives you His victory.

Prayer: Father, You sent Your Son to die in my place. I need fear nothing for I know the depths of Your love and mercy to me. Grant me to boldly proclaim all You have done for me. In the Name of Jesus. Amen.