

## The Gospel of Mark.

### Study Week 5 – Being Disciples

#### 1. Choosing 12

- 12 is significant. There were 12 tribes in Israel. Jesus is the fulfilment of Israel, he is God's chosen. He comes not to restore a political kingdom, but to establish a new kingdom, that will extend to the whole world.
- Seem to be normal blokes, working men who on the face of it had no prior religious training, no thought of following a religious life. Seen in how often they fall foul of the religious etiquette of the day.
  - They don't fast like disciples (2:18).
  - They eat grain on the Sabbath (2:23)
  - Didn't wash their hands before eating (7:2).
  - Not deliberately winding up the Pharisees – but just being themselves... and Jesus didn't see the need to train them up in the so called 'rules'.
- These were 12 apostles from among a good number of followers. Looking at 3:13 gives the impression that Jesus had a number of followers, but 12 were appointed as Apostles
- An inner circle of Peter James and John? On three occasions Mark notes that Jesus separates these three (Jairus daughter, the transfiguration, the garden of gethsemane)

#### 2. Follow me

- Mark 1: 14-20. Jesus calls his first disciples... he simply says follow me.
  - Easy to get hung up on the 'call' of God for our lives, often we narrow it down to a specific task or ministry such as a preacher or a missionary, worship leader.
  - The call of Jesus is this..."follow me"! Jesus calls followers and anyone who professes to be a Christian is a follower because they have been called to follow.
  - From among his followers he sends ... Go into all the world (16:15), he appoints, he designates (Mark 3) he gives (Ephesians) ... but our call is to follow.
  - Leadership - principles, training, diplomas, networks? But the best leaders are followers. Jesus took his 12 and didn't give them 3 years of leadership training, but 3 years of "follower" training. = discipleship.
  - Not necessarily a lightning bolt moment, can read Mark and think it was something like that, but maybe more nuanced – compare with Luke's account. Consider a small village/town environment, Jesus possibly already known.
- Mark 10:17-31. A rich man approaches Jesus. Other gospels tell us he was young and a ruler/ a leader.
  - He requests advice for obtaining eternal life.
  - Jesus lists the 2<sup>nd</sup> table of 10 commandments, those relating to our behaviour towards others...but he omits one

- Man concludes that he is righteous...but then comes the sting in tail, one thing you lack...we've missed one out, you shall not covet...so go and sell up, give everything to the poor, and follow me.
- The same call that Peter has, goes to this man – to Peter...drop your nets, give up your fishing and follow me. To this rich man he says give up your wealth, your ruling and follow me.
- Jesus then gives his disciples instruction on how difficult it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom
- The disciples' response is quite strange, they are amazed and ask "who then can be saved, but wealth is seen as a sign of God's favour in that culture and Jesus again turn cultural values upside down, true wealth isn't that we see on the outside, true wealth is within.

To follow Jesus is to not follow our own pathway. It may mean giving up everything that is dear to us. Jesus response to this rich man is not that he will receive eternal life by the giving up of his wealth, by keeping all the commandments, but by following Jesus, but he couldn't follow Jesus because he wanted to follow his own way, he wanted to pursue wealth.

Is. 53:6 'we all like sheep have gone astray, each of us turned to his own way'

Mark 8:34 2if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

### 3. Who is the greatest?

- Mark 9: 33-36 Disciples have been arguing about who was the greatest.
  - Peter James and John had just been witnesses to the transfiguration.
  - Then a story where some of the disciples had been unable to cast out a demon from a child.
  - Mark doesn't directly connect these incidences, but clearly some kind of rivalries are evident among the group.
  - Jesus teaches them that the greatest is the least, the servant of all.
- Mark 10: 35-45 James and John request to be given places of honour when Jesus comes into his glory
  - Jesus asks them if they can drink his cup or face his baptism, they reply that they can.
  - James and John have got hold of the wrong end of the stick, they have seen the glory of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Now they are on their way to Jerusalem and they assume that Jesus plan is to establish his kingdom, and they want to be at the forefront.
  - Jesus tells them in a hidden way that he is going to Jerusalem not to be crowned in a royal crown, but a crown of suffering, a crown of thorns. Not robes of power, but stripped naked of any robes and any human dignity/power.
  - Also background to this is Jesus words in 8:31 9:31, 32. Jesus has said he is to be betrayed, he will suffer and will be killed. So Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem.
  - Jesus then says that they will suffer, but that such places are already been taken!
  - Other disciples are indignant, they take the huff

- Jesus teaches them. - Earthly rulers lord over the people, but greatness is found in being a servant, a slave. Not just of God...but one another.
- Jesus then tells of his own mission “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many.

These kind of values didn't resonate well in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine, they don't today. But Jesus says that if we want to be considered great in his kingdom we must learn to serve. It's not just that we serve Jesus, he tells them that they have to be the servant of each other. In Mark 10:44 he says that if you want to be first, then you must first be slave of all. These are strong words for followers of Jesus... and of course he himself has come to earth to serve, to serve those who he created, to serve those who rejected him, who sinned against him. To serve those who would deny him, desert him, would kill him.

#### **4. Deniers, deserters and betrayers**

- We have said that the disciples were just ordinary blokes called by Jesus to follow him. But what also becomes clear in Mark's gospel is the weakness in their characters.
- Just discussed the rivalries that sometimes surfaced, previously that they were sometimes afraid, a bit dull, on numerous occasions when they just don't understand the nature of who Jesus is or his purpose.
- Last supper. Jesus in 14:27 Tells his disciples that they will all fall away, all Jesus closest followers will desert him at his hour of greatest need.
  - Peter, outspoken as usual emphatically denies that he will deny his Lord, saying that he is willing to die with Jesus. All the other disciples concur.
  - Later we find Jesus on trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter is in the courtyard outside.
  - Jesus is asked if he the Christ, the son of God and in answering yes condemns himself to death, Peter is asked if he is a follower of Jesus and answers no, thus fulfilling the prediction of Jesus.
- Of course all the others do the same, when we arrive at the crucifixion, some women were watching from a distance. On the morning of the resurrection three women go to the tomb. Disciples are nowhere to be seen, hiding away in fear.
- Judas, sits around the table at the last supper. He has already put into his action his plan of betrayal. He dips his hand into the bowl with Jesus and Jesus speaks out that Judas will soon betray him.
  - Later in the evening, whilst in the garden of gethsemane, Judas arrives to complete his plan, a squad of soldiers behind him, kisses Jesus to identify him so that the soldiers get their man.

Contrast Peter and Judas. Peter's act of betrayal caused him to weep bitterly, but other gospels he returns to the other disciples and eventually is restored and goes on to be a pillar in the fledgling church. Judas realises the next morning what he has done. He tries to undo his treachery by returning the money he received, but it is too late. Matthew reports that Judas hangs himself. Judas tries to rectify his mistake on his own, tries to pay the price for his betrayal, but it is not enough. Jesus disciples it is clear were eminently fallible they get it wrong so many times. Some of the mistakes weren't minor... deserting, denying and betraying their Lord at his hour of greatest need. They ceased being followers, they declined to serve.

How fallible are we? When are the times that we deny, desert or betray our Lord? Every time we choose not to follow, we seek our own path, we disobey the commands of God, we decline to serve, lord it over those we think are beneath us, we set ourselves against one another as rivals, claiming to be the greatest or seek privilege.

We also can learn a lesson from Peter, he denied his Lord, but stayed in fellowship with his fellow disciples – and in doing so met the resurrected Lord, who forgave him and restored him and set him back on the path.

#### **5. Sent Out : Mark 6: 7-12**

- Another of Mark's themes is authority.
  - He taught with authority 1:27
  - He had authority to forgive sins 2:10
  - Overturning the temple tables, chief priest ask him who gives him authority to act in this way. 11:28
  - We discussed earlier, authority over nature, the spirit world, even life and death.
  - Here in Mark 6 we see that Jesus gives authority to his disciples
- The disciples have delegated authority of Jesus, they act in his name. They have apostolic authority.
- Care needed with authority beyond this Foundation of the apostles. If any person claims to have authority, then care needed, because it needs to be tested against scripture. Mormons, Roman catholics.
- These disciple are sent.
  - Under authority
  - Go out in pairs
  - Not to take money or too many clothes
  - To receive hospitality kindly
  - To expect rejection, but move on, don't let rejection define the expectation

We started by saying that Jesus calls followers to himself. He calls and then he sends. His followers have a great story to tell. The kingdom of God has come to earth, There is forgiveness, there is freedom, there is life and it is all found in Jesus

Next Week.... The road to the cross.