



**KING OF
HEARTS**

A Few Things about the Gospel of Mark:

There is a strong, early Christian tradition that this gospel was written by Mark, who was a companion of the apostle, Paul, Barnabas, and eventually, Peter. Mark probably wrote his gospel a few years before Peter's death in order to collect many of the stories that were being told about Jesus at the time. The gospel of Mark was meant to be read in one sitting, so that, it would be an encouragement and guide to believers. The original audience was probably the early church in Rome made up of Jewish and gentile believers.



How to Use This Book:

To begin, plan to bring your booklet to church with you on the weekends. You can use it to take notes on the weekend messages. If you are unable to be at church, you can also watch the weekend messages online.

Each week you have five days of devotions to go with the scriptures for the week. Participate in the daily devotions as much as you can. The booklets are also for your small group to use. Each weeks small group material is available as well as the memory verse for the series. Our hope is that this booklet will help you experience the gospel of Mark in every way – as an individual in your quiet time, in the worship services on the weekend, and group life and family life. It is our gift to you. May it be an incredible tool to come alongside you wherever you are on your spiritual journey, helping you take your next steps to know and become like Jesus.

Let's Begin...

Thank you for taking the challenge to walk through the **Gospel of Mark** with the church this summer. We believe this will be one of the greatest times of intentional growth in the history of our church. The message of Mark is uniquely given to call us to an all-out pursuit of God by following Jesus. When we make following Jesus the focus of our life, we are changed. We become the best version of ourselves and we find a life that is actually worth living.

Mark has been described as the forgotten Gospel. Most people prefer the teaching of Matthew, the earthy realism of Luke or the intimacy of John. Mark is the shortest Gospel and most of what is in Mark is found in the other Gospels, especially Luke and Matthew. For this reason, few people think of Mark as their “favorite Gospel.” Many are unaware of Mark’s unique message, which not only gives us a crucial understanding of the life and work of Christ, but also frames the Christian life as a life of following the Rabbi Jesus. Mark is life changing! Mark is a great place for the new believer to begin and for the seasoned believer to often return.

There is an intensity and intentionality created in Mark, in part, by Mark’s use of the word ‘*immediately*’ which he uses 46 times in the book’s 16 chapters. The word is used less to create a timeline, but rather to create a sense of urgent calling that we are created to pursue God by following Jesus. Jesus’ call to ‘*follow me*’ should not be understood as simply believing the facts about His life and agreeing that He is good and what He did is important. It is more than doing Christian activities or beginning religious practices. For Mark, following Jesus was about learning Jesus and imitating Him. Mark calls us to understand how Jesus thought, what He cared about, and what He did so that in following Jesus, we can think feel and act the way He did. Mark is meant to be an experience and a guidebook for us to follow Jesus in a sense that it changes our whole life.

One important example is Mark’s handling of the death of Jesus. Three times in this short Gospel Jesus predicts His death. Mark races to this climatic event, to show Jesus intentionality about fulfilling His purpose of dying on the cross. It is clear that Mark wants us to understand Jesus’ death as an atonement for our sin. Mark also wants us to understand Jesus’ intentional march to the cross as an example for the follower of Christ. Calling the follower of Christ to pick up their cross and embrace a life of love, sacrifice, and service to God and others as the pathway to finding a life that is really worth living. This is why we are making **Mark 8: 34–37** the memory verse for the series.

If you are a parent Mark is the perfect Gospel for you to use to introduce your child to a life of following Jesus. After all, Christian parenting is simply a process of discipleship.

King Of Hearts – The Gospel of Mark

This booklet is a guide through the summer messages of 2024. Use it to take weekend message notes, participate in daily devotions and quiet time on your own, and as a small group guide for discussion each week.

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Memory Verse for the “King of Hearts” Series

Mark 8:34–37 (ESV) — *34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul?”*

Please take time to memorize this verse over the next nine weeks. If you are in a small group work alongside the members of your small group, memorizing parts of the verse throughout the study. Be prepared to share the entire verse with your group at the end of the nine weeks. If you do not belong to a small group, please work on the verse as an individual throughout the study.

We encourage groups to meet during the summer.

For your first meeting:

- Introduce yourselves.
- Engage in a fun activity together, like sharing coffee and dessert.
- Talk about what you hope to gain through this study.
- Spend time in prayer for one another.
- Exchange contact information.
- Please commit to praying for each of your group members and your group leader over the next nine weeks.

How to Have a Daily Devotional Time

Central Lutheran is beginning this journey through the Gospel of Mark together as a church family. At Central, we believe that each person should individually spend time with God and if possible be in community in a small group for discussion and group prayer. Why do we believe having a regular time with God is so important? To know Jesus, we must deepen and strengthen our relationship with him. To become like him, we must know him in relationship. We are all different. Each of us will have our own unique relationship with God. For this reason, it is important to understand that there is not one specific devotional pathway that will be a perfect fit for each person. Take time to discover the time of day and place that helps you feel connected with God.

Some suggestions for your quiet time:

- Establish a time of day and specific place to begin.
 - As you sit with God, start by becoming quiet. You can do this through a few deep breaths. Make sure your phone is in another room. Turn off the television and do your best to remove distractions.
 - Sometimes it helps to have a pad of paper next to you. If distractions come, write them down so that you can work through them later. For example, if you remember, you need to do something make yourself a note so that you can let it go during your time with God.
 - Start with a prayer asking God to open your heart to Him and His message.
 - As you finish your time, be silent and wait for a little bit to see how God works in your heart and mind. Don't rush away. You might miss something He is trying to say to you.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what God might be speaking to you through the Scriptures and the teachings on Mark.
 - End your time in prayer, expressing praise, confession, prayers for others, and prayers for yourself and your family.
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During the next nine weeks, we are going to grow closer to God through the Gospel of Mark. Believe God. He desires to deepen our relationship with Him as individuals, group members and as a church. This is going to be a very exciting time. As God works, take notes and be ready to share your stories. We want God to receive all the glory for what He is about to do in and through us!

Week 1: “ Follow Me ” Mark 1:1; 2:13-17

Mark 1:1 (ESV) — *1 The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

Mark 2:13–17 (ESV) — *13 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. 14 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. 15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at: Centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend Message Notes



WEEK 1, Monday

Begin your week by reading the first two chapters of Mark.

Write down any thoughts you have as you read.

Write down any questions you have.

What do you think it means for us to follow Jesus today?

When we think of following Christ, we think of following His ways and being guided by His life and by His example. Please get out a note card. Write out our memory verse. Put this card with your devotions and begin memorizing **verse 34**.

Mark 8:34 (ESV) – And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Spend some time reflecting on your life right now. What evidence would you be able to present to someone to make the case that you are a follower of Christ? If all of your examples are task oriented, it is possible that these are only outward expressions of your relationship with Jesus. These steps are good, but ultimately the best steps of following Christ come through inner transformation. As we spend time alone with Christ in relationship and time in His Word and in prayer, He begins to change and transform our inner life. This change is evidence of our relationship with Him. It shows that we are following Him. These examples show that we are taking steps to know and become like Him. Spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you how following Christ is changing you from the inside out. If you don't feel like your inner life is changing, ask God why. Ask Him for help. Ask Him to guide your next steps. If you know He is asking you to follow Him in a specific way, ask for His strength to obey Him.

WEEK 1, Tuesday

Mark 2:13–14 (ESV) — **13** *He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them.* **14** *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.*

Most of us know Levi as Matthew the tax collector. Matthew is another name for Levi. The first step Matthew took in following Jesus was to hold a great banquet at his house. At this banquet, a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them (**Luke 5:27-32**). Matthew's first step in following Jesus was to make it known to everyone by hosting this banquet. In thinking about your own life, how do you make it known that you are a follower of Christ? One of the ways we do this is by taking the step of baptism. In baptism, we proclaim that we are following Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Is baptism you or your child's next step? If so, please email Pam Moran: pam@central-lutheran.org.

If you have taken the step of baptism, how else do you share with others that you are a follower of Christ? Think about this today. If you realize you rarely let others know of your faith, ask yourself why. Pray and talk with God about the reason or reasons you discover. As we follow Christ, His desire is that we would share His story. People hear the good news of the Gospel when we share how His story is changing our story as we follow Him. As we share, people see Christ in us. As they see Christ at work in us, they begin to desire Christ to work in their life as well.

Have you shared your story with anyone lately? Have you shared your story and how He is changing you? If not, ask Him for an opportunity to do so this week. As He works, plan to share this with your small group as you meet together. If once again today, you are realizing you need to grow in your relationship with Him, be encouraged. Share this desire with Him as you pray. Be open to share your story as He leads you this week.

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:34**.

WEEK 1, Wednesday

Mark 8:34 (ESV) — 34 *And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

Mark 10:21 (ESV) — 21 *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”*

Yesterday we talked about Matthew, who was a tax collector. What did it mean to be a tax collector in Jesus' time? Tax collectors played a pivotal role in the Roman oppression of the people. Tax collectors looked for ways to squeeze the most taxes from citizens because in the eyes of Rome, whichever tax collector secured the highest taxes was seen as the Victor. Corruption was rampant. Tax collectors were hated and known to be dishonest and unethical. Jesus choosing a tax collector to be one of His disciples would have been shocking to the religious people of His day. It would have been an offense for them to see Jesus partnering with someone of this nature but in this example, we see the truth of God. We see how, when we give our lives to Christ and follow Him, He sets us on a new path. As you read the two verses from today, continue to contemplate what it means to follow Christ. Think about how we are forgiven, made new and moving toward our new destiny. As we follow Him, He calls us to learn His ways and become like Him. We leave behind the person we used to be and we develop new patterns in Him. What hope! What do you need to let go of today? What do you need to express to hHm in prayer as you anticipate moving toward the new destiny you have in Him? Jesus is leading us to be different as we follow Him. Pray about this today. Ask Him for His help as you take your next steps to follow Him completely. Ask Him to remove all that is hindering His will from being accomplished in your life.



Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:34**.

WEEK 1, Thursday

Mark 2:15–17 (ESV) — **15** *And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16* *And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 17* *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

The Pharisees were not pleased to see Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors. What joy it should bring us to understand Jesus' reply: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Take some time to reflect on Jesus' statement. How has this message changed your life?

The Pharisees missed Jesus' purpose, and unfortunately, many can miss His purpose, even today. As God changes us from the inside out and helps us take steps toward Him, we are drawn away from who we were before we came to know Him. The beautiful gift of Christ is that when we follow Him, He helps us through every temptation guiding us to a better life in Him because He loves us. This is Grace. Are you struggling in a specific sin today? If so, there are many care resources available to you. God wants to help you take steps toward health and life in Him. Please contact Laura Garry for resources at Laura@central-lutheran.org

Maybe you are struggling with the sin of judgment today, just like the Pharisees. Repent and ask God to help you take steps to love and care for the people He places in your life. Confess the truth of your heart to Him and ask Him for guidance. All of us need to rejoice and have thanksgiving over God's grace.

Please take time in prayer and thank God for sending Jesus. Thank Him for the saving relationship we have been given in Jesus as we confess our sin to Him. Thank God for His love. Thank God for the way He is changing us and growing us to be more like Him. Thank Jesus for giving His life for us so that we have this gift of relationship!

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:34**.

WEEK 1, Friday

Jesus lived a simple life, yet it was a life filled with great meaning and impact. While on His journey on earth, He invited people to follow Him, challenging them to build their lives on a strong foundation. He called them to live wise and intelligent lives using His life as a model. This is what we have been talking about this week: Following Him.

At Central Lutheran, we believe this foundation of following Him more fully consists of five practices that, when incorporated into our lives in healthy and non-legalistic ways, help us to grow and become like Him. We follow Jesus by spending time with God in prayer, reading the Bible, sharing our faith, and serving others by being generous with our time and finances.

Ask God to help you discern what step He may be calling you to take as you study the Gospel of Mark. Read through the list above.

Please remember, the fact that you are doing devotions and participating in small group is outstanding! These are exceptional steps and the leadership of Central Lutheran wants to tell you how honored we are to be alongside you. Way to go!

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:34**.



WEEK 1, “ Follow Me ” *Group Discussion Points*

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

1. What jumped out at you through the message this weekend?
2. Please read **Mark 2:15–17** together as a group. **Mark 2:15–17 (ESV)** — **15** *And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16* *And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 17* *And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*
3. When was the last time you felt judged? How did it make you feel? Did you withdraw? Did you defend yourself? Why is judgment so toxic to our relationships? Maybe Jesus has healed you from some specific sins. Do you have compassion for others who struggle with those same sins, or do you find yourself looking down on them? Do you look down on those who struggle with different sins that you deem more unrighteous than yours? To follow Christ, we have to let go of all of this in Jesus’ name, come alongside one another and take steps together to know and become like Jesus. Talk about this as a group.
4. Jesus said, *“those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”* Do you ever struggle with this concept? Maybe you feel like you have sinned too much for God to love you? Share as a group.
5. Matthew was willing to let everyone know how his life had been changed by Jesus. Have you shared the story of how Christ is changing you? Does sharing your story and Christ’s story intimidate you? Why is that? Sharing your story can be a way to disarm that feeling of intimidation. In the devotions, it was suggested that you ask God to provide an opportunity for you to share your story. Did God give you an opportunity to share this week? If so, please share your experience with your group. There is a tool on the next page to help you.
6. Take time to share the memory verse for this week. **Recite together Mark 8:34.**



Navigators Discipleship Tool

Sharing about your own faith journey with Jesus is one of the most powerful ways you can help friends grasp how much God loves us.

If someone asked you to share today, you might find it challenging to explain how you came to believe in God, or what he means to you? If so, that's okay!

Try setting aside just 15 minutes to capture some key milestones in your journey with Christ below, and use this as a guide for sharing your story with others, whether in snippets over time or all at once over coffee. Remember, it's your story, so the more authentic and personal it is, the better.



STORIES OF REDEMPTION Preparing Your Personal Testimony

BEFORE

① Before you met Christ, what were some of your needs, what was lacking, or what was missing in your life?

② What methods for improving your life did you try that didn't work?

HOW

① What were the circumstances that caused you to consider following Jesus?

② What has become your favorite Bible verse and why?

③ Share about how you trusted Christ and give a brief explanation of the gospel. John 3:16 is a great verse to use.

AFTER

① Give an example of how God has met your needs—either physical or emotional—since you accepted Jesus.

② Share about what part of your relationship with God you're most grateful for today.



THIS TOOL IS MEANT TO BE SHARED. To download a copy visit navlink.org/testimony
Adapted from Deepening Your Roots In God's Family, 2011. Used by permission of NavPress.

WEEK 2: “ The Rules ” Mark 3:1-6

Mark 3:1–6 (ESV)

1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. **2** And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. **3** And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” **4** And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. **5** And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. **6** The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

If you were unable to be present at the weekend services, please watch the message online at: centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend message notes:

WEEK 2 musings important to note:

- Pharisees – believed in the oral tradition of the law passed down from God to Moses on Mount Sinai. They also believed in the written law known as the Torah. The Pharisees believed God gave Moses knowledge on how the laws were meant to be applied and they observed strict adherence to these laws. The Pharisees were men who believed in eternal life. They believed God would punish the wicked as well as reward the righteous. The Pharisees waited for a Messiah to usher in peace and save them from Rome and its oppression.
- Sadducees – did not believe in the oral tradition of the law. They believed only in the written law. They were elites who did not believe in eternal life.
- Essenes – believed it was best to move away and adopt a monastic life in the desert. They adhered to strict dietary laws and were committed to celibacy.
- Zealots – members of a Jewish sect who wanted a Jewish theocracy. They fiercely resisted the Romans to the point of physical and military rebellion.
- Herodians – they were a political party who followed King Herod, the puppet king of Rome. The Herodians were political foes of the Pharisees.

(The fact that the Pharisees and Herodians came together is stunning! These two groups hated one another. It is important to understand these distinctions as we move into Week 2 of our study.)

WEEK 2, Monday

Begin your week by reading the 3rd chapter of Mark. After you read the entire chapter, go back and re-read **verses 1 – 6**.

For this week's devotion, we are going to step into the shoes of those involved in this story. To begin, let's place ourselves into the lives of the Pharisees. Picture yourself standing in the synagogue. The picture here helps you see what you might look like. You follow hundreds of rules. You are also offended by Jesus. Think about why this would be. Why would He offend you? What is it about His teachings that cause your heart and mind so much frustration and anxiety? Read **Matthew 23** for a deeper understanding. As you stand in the synagogue, watching Jesus, what are you watching for? In Scripture, we understand that the Pharisees were watching for whether or not Jesus would heal on the Sabbath. They desperately wanted Jesus to heal the man, but not for the man's sake – only for their own. They were looking for a way they might accuse Jesus of breaking their rules. The Pharisees lives, filled with rigorous religious rituals, lost sight of loving God and loving people.



Think about your life. Have you ever been involved in something so deeply that it became about what you were involved in and caused you to lose sight of the people involved? Maybe you are, or were, on a company board and your focus on the bottom line led you to a place where the people affected by your decisions were the least of your concern. Maybe you have been, or are, a teacher or a nurse. Have the rules and regulations conveyed to you by the institution brought you to a place where the rules are your constant focus instead of the people you are there to care for?

At the time of these verses, the rules and regulations had become the focus of the Pharisees. This text shows that the Pharisees often cared more about following the rules than they did about caring for people. Do you see the same mentality unfolding anywhere in your life? If you are a parent, do the rules in your home have such a hold over your family that you have lost the ability to empathize with your child when they are struggling? Rules are good, but like the Pharisees we can be taken down a road of legalism if the rules create a place of distance from God and those He asks us to care for. Take time to pray about this today. Ask for His help to bring the people in your life back to a place where you care for them more than you care for the rules.

Begin memorizing **Mark 8:35 (ESV)**

35 *For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*

Create a card like you did last week to begin your memorization.

WEEK 2, Tuesday

Today we are going to spend another day in the Pharisees' shoes. The truth is, the Pharisees knew that if Jesus' ways took hold they would lose everything. They would lose their status and they would lose control. Be honest with God today. When you think about following Jesus, are you afraid of losing control of your life? Are you in fear of losing everything you know? Sadly, this focus caused the Pharisees to miss the truth of God. Their need to be in control caused them to completely miss the Son of God in their midst. Jesus wants to be the **King of our Hearts**, and if we are honest, sometimes this is a scary proposition because we aren't sure what this means. We can fear the unknown. We can fear losing control. When this happens, we can be just like the Pharisees. In our effort to control, our will and our plans can easily become the focus, instead of trusting God. Ask yourself if this is true in your life. Awareness is the first step. As you become aware of your need to control rather than trust God, take steps toward a closer relationship with God by spending time alone with Him. Tell Him that you want your focus to be less and less about being in control and more and more about trusting Him.

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:35**.



WEEK 2, Wednesday

As a Christian, do you feel the need to be perfect like the Pharisees? What image do you feel you need to portray? Are you weary from trying to live up to the demands of this life? Take time to reflect on this now.

Why is portraying this specific image the pathway you have chosen? In many ways, the Pharisees lived as if their outward image was everything. This is why Jesus told them in **Matthew 23:27**: *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrite you are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean.”*

Jesus was incredibly frustrated with the Pharisees because so much of what they did was for an outward appearance. Jesus wanted them to understand that what they truly needed was inner change.

Please read **Luke 18:9–14 (ESV)** several times.

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner! 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Consider what Jesus is saying. Take time to pray about what Jesus is teaching in these verses. How is God speaking to you today? Take time to journal and write your thoughts here. What step is Jesus asking you to take?

Journal Here:

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:35**.

WEEK 2, Thursday

For today, take time to picture what it would have been like to be the man with the withered hand. Sit quietly. Imagine yourself with this ailment. Think of all the things that this would prohibit you from because in the time of Jesus, this man was seen as unclean. Those who saw the man believed that God did not love him as much as He loved those without a handicap. In fact, many believed, God was punishing the man because he or someone in his life had sinned. As you sit quietly, imagine how people might mistreat you, or look down on you. Now picture yourself in the synagogue. Imagine what the Pharisees think and believe about you and your family. Feel the loneliness and the isolation this man might have felt. Feel the hope he might also have experienced as he saw Jesus. Certainly he had heard who Jesus was.

As Jesus walks in, imagine yourself yearning for healing. Think about how you might wish for Jesus to notice you and to have compassion on your situation and your circumstances. As Jesus asks you to stretch out your hand, imagine your thoughts. Do you feel excited? Do you wonder if He really can heal you? Do any of your thoughts go to the fact that you know it is the Sabbath and the Pharisees don't believe you should be healed? Do you feel judged by them as you stand before Jesus? Now imagine your experience as Jesus has compassion on you and heals your withered hand. Jesus cared about the man. Jesus also knew what the Pharisees were thinking, and their hardened hearts angered Him. As the man is being healed, the man knew Jesus cared specifically for him. How do you need Jesus to show His care specifically for you today? As you take time alone with Him, tell Him where you are hurting. Tell Him what you are struggling with. What feels withered in your life? Is there dryness in your spiritual walk?

Do you have a physical ailment? Are you struggling as a parent? What have the difficulties you are experiencing caused you to believe about yourself? Do you believe God sees you as Jesus saw the man with the withered hand? Ask God to show you how to take steps toward Him, as He brings you healing in His name. Trust Him. As you spend time with Him stretch out your hands in front of you. Give Him your burdens and all that is weighing you down, just as **1 Peter 5:7** invites us to do: *"... casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."*

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:35**.

WEEK 2, Friday

If we take time to think about Jesus's perspective on what happened in [Mark 3:1–6](#), we see two different emotions. When Jesus entered the synagogue, His eyes came in contact with the man with the withered hand as well as the Pharisees standing ready to accuse Him. His heart filled with compassion for the man who needed healing. Scripture says Jesus also experienced anger and grief over the Pharisees' hardhearted position. Most likely, Jesus felt these emotions all in the same moment as He looked upon the man and the teachers of the law.

Ponder this scene. How is it that we can be filled with love and compassion while at the same time feeling anger and grief? What injustices in our world make you angry? As God opens our eyes to brokenness and suffering, we too can have hearts filled with love and compassion for the hurting while also feeling anger and grief toward those carelessly inflicting the suffering. How has God opened your eyes to the suffering in our world? Who are the specific people He has asked you to care for? We can get off track if we stay focused on our anger and grief. Jesus was wise in His anger. He did not sin.

For this reason, our anger and grief over the brokenness we see should be poured out in prayer so that God's love and compassion for people becomes what fuels us. Who is God calling you to love and serve? What place of brokenness in our world has He centered your heart upon in order that He can make a difference in our world through you?

Maybe today you realize your life is so busy that you have not had time to see the hurting world around you. Maybe today you realize that you are filled with pride, just as the Pharisees were. Ask God to open your eyes. Spend your quiet time asking Him to help you see if pride is blinding you to those hurting around you. Ask Him if there are people He has placed in your life who need your prayers and your compassion. The Pharisees completely missed the man with the withered hand. Who might you be missing? Perhaps it is your spouse. Maybe it is your child or a family member. Possibly it is your neighbors or someone at work. Maybe it is someone in your school, or on your sports team. Maybe it is one of your teachers or maybe it is one of your friends. It could be that you haven't met the person or persons yet. Ask God to give you His eyes. As you continue to pray and seek Him, He will reveal who He desires you to care for in this season of your life. As He reveals this person or persons to you, share with your small group and ask for prayer about your next step as an individual and/or as a group.

Please continue to memorize [Mark 8:35](#).

WEEK 2, “ The Rules ” *Group Discussion Points*

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

As you begin your time together this week, go around your small group circle practicing your memory verse. Grab a beanbag or a small ball. As you throw it around to people have each person share the next word in **Mark 8:35**. Next week we will challenge you to recite **Mark 8:34–35** as one. Maybe you want to give some incentives as a group? How can you encourage one another in this effort? What works best for your group members?

Remember, don't make it about the rule. We memorize scripture for God to change our heart – changing our life from the inside out.

Please break into smaller groups of at least two people if possible. Each group should read the scripture focused on either the Pharisees, the man with the withered hand, or Jesus. Take time to go through the questions below in regard to your breakout groups specific focus.

Group #1 – Pharisees:

- As you read this section of scripture from the Pharisees' point of view, what sticks out to you? What were the Pharisees concentrated on? How are you made aware of their pride? How did their pride cause them to miss the man with the withered hand? Did Jesus' anger at their position drive them to repentance? Why or why not? The Pharisees were living to protect an outward image. Is this something you also struggle with as a Christian? Share some examples of how this can be true in your own lives. What other insights do you have?
- What steps can you take to keep your relationship with God, your focus, rather than focusing on simply following rules like the Pharisees? Rules are good, but when they are what drives us, we get off the path of following the person of Jesus Christ.

Group #2—The man with the withered hand:

- As you read this section of scripture from the perspective of the man with the withered hand, what comes to mind? Remember that in the time of Jesus, this man was seen as unclean. His deformity led those around around him to believe he was less than they were. In fact, when people would look at him, they would assume that he or someone in his family had sinned, and his deformity was a punishment from God. How does the isolation and judgment the man experienced make you feel? How do you imagine he felt as he saw Jesus enter the synagogue? Do you think he realized Jesus was going to heal him? How do you think he felt knowing the Pharisees were watching with such fixation to see what Jesus was going to do? How would their judgment affect you? How does Jesus' compassion on the man relate to you today? What in your own life feels withered?

Group #3—Jesus:

- As you read this section of scripture from Jesus' point of view, what emotions does Scripture say Jesus was experiencing? To the man, Jesus said, "Come here." What do these simple words convey to you about who Jesus is? Does Jesus' compassion for the man stir compassion in you? How? To the Pharisees, Jesus asked, "*Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?*" Jesus was angry at the Pharisees. What makes you angry? Jesus was angry, but He was wise in His anger. Read **James 1:19–20**. What is the difference between Jesus' anger and our own?

Come back together as a group and take time to share what each breakout group discovered.

Ask these last two questions as a large group and then spend time in prayer.

1. What struggle in your life do you need to stretch out to Jesus for healing right now?
2. What person or persons might God be asking you to pray for and come alongside of as an individual or a group? Maybe there is an individual to whom your group can send a card, or for whom you could make a few meals, help financially, babysit, mow the lawn, or simply sit and spend time together. Maybe He is calling your group to serve in the community in a specific way. Make a list of the issues people struggle with that you are burdened for. Pray together and seek God's direction for how He would like you to serve.



WEEK 3, “ The Soils ” Mark 4:1-20

Mark 4:1–20 (ESV)

The Parable of the Sower:

1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. **2** And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: **3** “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. **4** And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. **5** Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. **6** And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. **8** And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” **9** And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The Purpose of the Parables:

10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. **11** And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, **12** so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.’ ” **13** And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? **14** The sower sows the word. **15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. **16** And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. **17** And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. **18** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, **19** but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **20** But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at: centrallutheran.church/watch.

Weekend Message Notes:

WEEK 3, Monday

Recite [Mark 8:34–35](#) by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these two verses.

Important to note as we begin this week – the word parable comes from the Greek *parabole*, which implies something that is ‘set alongside’ something else in order to make a comparison between the two. In a parable, Jesus talks about things His listeners are familiar with. Jesus then shares it alongside the spiritual truth He wants to communicate.

Begin your week by reading the fourth chapter of Mark.

Our study this week focuses on [Mark 4:1–20](#).

You can also read [Matthew 13:1–23](#) as well as [Luke 8:4–15](#).

Jesus was a storyteller, and He used the power of story to teach. The parable of the soils is a cornerstone parable. In three different gospels, Jesus unfolds this parable as well as explains its meaning. This is a prominent teaching, and it is one we should focus on.

The soil is a metaphor (a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, especially something abstract) for how we receive God's teaching in our relationship with Him day in and day out. The seed in the parable is the Word of God. The Word of God is Jesus Himself ([John 1:1-3](#)).

Take some time today to imagine yourself running to Jesus, eager to be taught and to learn from Him. Why is this important? Are we eager to learn and grow in Christ? Each day we have the opportunity to hear from God. The soils represent the ways we receive what God is teaching us. As we begin this week, ask God to reveal this truth to you. Ask Him to open your eyes to how His love, His Word, His teaching, His conviction as His purposes fall on you. Are you expectant, desiring fruit to come through all God expresses to you in relationship? What areas of your life are fruitful? What areas of your life are closed off to God? Ask for His wisdom as we study the Parable of the Soils this week.

Recite [Mark 8:34–35](#) by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these two verses.

WEEK 3, Tuesday

Mark 4:3–4 (ESV) *“Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.”*

Jesus explains in **Mark 4:15**: *“And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.”*

Not only do we have the opportunity to understand the truth of Jesus, each and every day, but it is important that we recognize the spiritual forces working to steal away the truth of Jesus as it is revealed to us. Scripture tells us Satan is a liar (**John 8:44**). As you grow in Christ, recognize how the enemy looks for opportune times to distract you from God (**Luke 4:13**).

How is the enemy distracting you from God's will? In what ways is he stealing truth in your life? In what ways is he hardening your heart? For example, maybe God has been asking you to begin to tithe, or begin to give of your time and resources for the benefit of others. Maybe Satan is whispering to you that you need all you have, and that you can't possibly share with others. Perhaps God has been convicting you to spend less time at work in order to spend more time with your family. Maybe Satan is telling you that your family will always be there and that they are fine without you around. Spend time thinking and reflecting on how God is speaking to you. Ask God to help you see where the enemy is speaking lies to you and working to harden your heart and hinder your taking steps to know and become like Jesus. Remember the admonition from **Hebrews 4:7-13**: *“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”* We have to remember that, allowing our hearts to harden will make it easier and easier for them to harden even more over time. Pray against this temptation today. Pray for Jesus to be the **King of Your Heart**.

Recite **Mark 8:34–35** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these two verses.

WEEK 3, Wednesday

Mark 4:5–6 (ESV) — *Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.*

Jesus explains in **Mark 4:16–17 (ESV)**— *“And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.”*

People can believe what Jesus is sharing with them right away when they hear the truth. As long as things are going okay, and no one is challenging them about their belief in Jesus, they can move forward in their faith. Sadly, though, when difficulty comes we can quickly lose our reliance on God. Our faith becomes shallow. Why do you think this is? Jesus guarantees in Scripture that we will have trouble (**John 16:33**). He also explains in **John 15:18-20a** that we will be persecuted for our faith. Following Jesus doesn't mean we are spared from persecution or from the heartache of this broken world. What is important to remember when trouble comes is that Jesus is with us. He hasn't left us or forsaken us. Instead, he is walking with us through the storm and as He walks with us through difficulty, our faith and trust in Him will grow. Scripture tells us that our faith and trust in Him is worth more than gold.

Are you walking through a difficult time in your life right now? Are you tempted to walk away from God in an area of your life? Are you tempted to look at God merely for His provision? How is your relationship with God shallow? As He leads you through difficult times, are you tempted to throw up your hands in anger, or to reach for shallow things to provide you relief. Is your relationship with Him based solely on your needs rather than Him being God? Reflect on this today. Pray and ask God to show you how parts of your relationship with Him may be shallow.

Recite **Mark 8:34–35** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these two verses.

WEEK 3, Thursday

Mark 4:7 (ESV)— *Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.*

Jesus explains in **Mark 4:18–19 (ESV)**— *“And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”*

It is easy to be swept away in the world, to be unable to take steps toward Jesus. The busyness of our world can overtake our hearts. We can be overcome by the world’s worries, its riches and its pleasures. As you ponder on this truth, how is God speaking to you? How are life worries, riches, and pleasures choking God out of your life?

At Central Lutheran Church, we want every person to mature in their faith. If in spending time with God today, you realize that your maturity in Christ is being choked by the worries of the world as well as its riches and pleasures, ask God for help. Tell Him this is where you are on your journey, but that it is not where you want to be. Ask Him to give you clarity on your next steps, Jesus wants us to be receptive to Him when He speaks.

Recite **Mark 8:34–35** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these two verses.



WEEK 3, Friday

Mark 4:8 (ESV)—*And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”*

Mark 4:20 (ESV)—*But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”*

As Christ followers, we want our lives to bear fruit. It is important that we understand how a hard heart, shallow heart, or the busyness of the world (the examples of the soils) chokes out the fruit God desires to bear in our lives. Each day we should live with the perspective, how is God going to speak to me today? How am I going to hear it? How am I going to respond?

In following Jesus, we leave behind the person we used to be. That person has died. We are a new creation. We leave behind the old life, knowing that when we operate in the flesh, we can only give our best effort to get to God. Our flesh is crippled by sin. Instead, Jesus is leading us to a new identity in Him. He is calling us to learn to be like Him. We are forgiven, so we deny the old patterns and we live in hope as He changes us from the inside out. It is the ‘now and not yet’ – we are new creations at the same time we are still maturing and growing into the person we will be when we stand before God for eternity.

As we are receptive to Jesus and His teaching, we begin to live lives that bear fruit. Jesus does the work in us and through us. It is His power at work within us, moving us further and further toward our new destiny in Him. Following Jesus gives our lives purpose and meaning. His will and His ways become our own. Christ in us works to bring a crop that bears good fruit. As He speaks to us, we look for the proper way to respond. For example, if God asks us to forgive someone, we have four ways we can respond, based on the parable of the soils. The fruitful response is to forgive. This response shows we are following Christ.

Do you see Christ bearing fruit in your life? Don't beat yourself up or allow the enemy to lie to you about where you are. Instead, ask God to show you how your dependence on Him creates good soil from which His fruit can grow in you. The change He does in you will continue on and on as you trust in Him. He wants you to take steps toward Him. He wants your life to bring Him glory. Pray about this today. Spend time asking God for what you specifically need. He knows your heart, so you do not need to hide anything from Him. Jesus loves you and wants what is best for you. He wants your life to bear fruit and bring Him and His Father glory! He wants to be [King of Your Heart!](#)

Recite [Mark 8:34–35](#) by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these two verses.

WEEK 3: “ The Soils ” *Group Discussion Points*
PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

As you begin your time together this week. Go through your memory verse as a group. Take time to share it by going around the circle, having each person say one word of the verse at a time as you go around. Did you decide on any incentives this week? If so, follow through on what you decided. Remember to encourage one another as you memorize!

Please read **Mark 4:1–20** out loud, giving each person a turn to read if they wish. You can also read **Matthew 13:1–23** as well as **Luke 8:4–15**.

1. As Jesus stood in the boat, teaching to the crowd on the shore, Jesus knew the Pharisees would not understand and believe in Him. He also knew that some in the crowd were more interested in watching Him provide a miracle or a meal. Are you ever this way with God? How? Why do you think this is true?

2. Jesus taught the crowd in parables in order to draw everyone into His teaching. What do you think about Jesus teaching in parables? What strikes you, good or bad? Do you enjoy reading the parables? Why or why not? What makes you thankful Jesus teaches in parables? What challenges you about Jesus speaking in parables? What do you find challenging about this parable in particular?

3. Each day we should live with the perspective, ‘How is God going to speak to me today? How am I going to hear it? How am I going to respond?’ As Christ followers, it is important we understand how a hard heart, shallow heart, or the busyness of the world (the examples of the soils) chokes out the fruit God desires to bear in our lives.
 - a) How is the enemy distracting you from God’s will? In what ways is he stealing truth in your life? And what ways is he hardening your heart?
 - b) Discuss as a group how, in times of persecution and difficulty, we can be tempted to be shallow in our faith. We can be tempted to focus on God’s provision rather than our relationship with Him. How has this been true in your own journey with God?
 - c) How has the busyness of the world affected your relationship with God? How are the world’s ways and pleasures choking God out of your life?
 - d) Share a time during which God led you to follow Him in a specific way that, in turn, brought the fruit of life, change and inner transformation.

Take Prayer requests specifically to how God is speaking to each group member through the parable of the soils. Spend time praying for one another. Partner up and take time this week to encourage one another through email, text, or phone calls.

WEEK 4: “ The Storms ” Mark 4:35-41; 6:45-52

Mark 4:35–41 (ESV)— On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” **36** And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. **37** And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. **38** But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” **39** 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. **40** He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” **41** And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Mark 6:45–52 (ESV) — Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. **46** And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. **47** And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. **48** And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, **49** but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, **50** 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.” **51** And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, **52** for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

If you were unable to attend this week’s service please go to centrallutheran.church/watch to hear the message.

Weekend Message Notes

WEEK 4, Monday

Begin memorizing **Mark 8:36**. Use the card you created to continue to put the verses to memory.

Please read Mark 4:35-41. Also read the 5th chapter of Mark.

You can also read **Matthew 8:18; 23-27** as well as **Luke 8:22-25** in relation to the story we are focusing on today.

The Sea of Galilee is situated in a basin bordered by mountains. Cool air originates from the Mediterranean, flows through the mountain passes and meets up with the hot, humid, desert air over the Sea of Galilee. For this reason, the Sea of Galilee is vulnerable to unexpected, fierce storms. This is what is occurring in the Scripture we are reading today. The storm the disciples experienced was so violent, the waves broke over the boat nearly flooding it. When the storm rose, the disciples became frightened. They were terrified they were going to drown.

How have storms formed in your life? The unexpected phone call, job loss, medical diagnosis, broken marriage, prodigal child, and so on. As the storms developed around you, how did you feel? Were you frightened? Were you overwhelmed, anxious, lonely? Did you feel as if God had left you? As the storm in our story rose, the disciples woke Jesus who was sleeping in the stern on a cushion. Their words to Him express their desperation: *“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”* In the storms of life, do you feel as if God has left you? Maybe you are in a storm now. Do you feel as if you have been abandoned by God?

As Jesus calmed the wind and the waves, the disciples were no longer afraid of the storm. In that moment, they were overcome with the truth that Jesus was the Son of God. They witnessed God's Presence and His Power as they watched Jesus calm the storm. Their fear gave way to wonder. In our storms, how can our fear also give way to wonder in Jesus? When we can't see God, how do we trust He is at work calming the storm? Sometimes He doesn't calm the storm as much as He calms our anxious soul. This is one of the most telling pieces of our relationship with God – His peace available to us in the storm. As we focus on Him in worship, in His Word, and in prayer, the peace He provides for our souls is evidence of His Presence and His Power at work in our storms.

If you are in a storm, remember that God is at work in big and small ways. Sometimes we are desperate for the big and we miss the small. Calming the wind and the waves was big, but calming our hearts in an anxious situation, or calming our anger when we want to shout, may be small ways we miss God at work in our storms. **Reflect** on **Philippians 4:6-7** as you end your quiet time today: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* Spend time in prayer. Thank God that you can trust Him, especially when you are in a storm. Thank Him for how He is always at work, even when we cannot see. Let your request be known to Him, asking Him to make you aware of His Presence.



WEEK 4, Tuesday

Please re-read the Scriptures from yesterday, paying special attention to Jesus as you read. Consider Jesus' response to the storm. Jesus, who is sleeping in the stern on a cushion, communicates to us that He is not panicked. The tossing of the boat in the wind and the waves does not overwhelm Him. Jesus went to sleep and slept soundly, despite the storm raging in the lake. The wind and waves that terrify the disciples, did not terrify Him. The reason they did not is because Jesus knows who is in control. The disciples were losing control of the boat and were scared they were going to drown. Jesus, on the other hand, knew that God was in control and He was able to rest. This example is important for us to contemplate. Our lives can be surrounded by storm. We can be overwhelmed and frightened. In these moments, more than any other, we must trust God. It is OK to tell Him how hard this is. We see this expressed throughout scripture. For example, picture the Israelites standing at the Red Sea with the Egyptians bearing down on them (Exodus 14). There seemed to be no way out. In their minds, everything was out of control. God parted the Red Sea and they walked through on dry land. In every way, our trust in God needs to increase. This can be incredibly hard sometimes. We may be surrounded by circumstances that do not make sense to us. Everything may seem out of control. The one thing we can hold onto in these moments is the knowledge that God loves us and that as we trust Him, He will work. The important piece is to empty out all we are experiencing to Him in prayer and continue to tell Him that even though we don't understand, we trust Him. What do you need to trust God with today?

Write it here:

Spend time in prayer, lifting all that you are experiencing to God. Ask Him to help you trust Him. Thank Him for the way your trust in Him begins to increase.

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:36**.

WEEK 4, Wednesday

Please read **Mark 4:36 (ESV)**—*And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.*

In this verse, we understand that Jesus left the crowd behind. This is a significant reminder to us, that we also need time away from the noise and busy-ness of the world around us, especially in the storms of life. Scripture tells us that Jesus was exhausted and needed to get away and rest. He got into the boat and fell asleep despite the boat tossing and sinking in the waves. Jesus was able to sleep. His soul was at peace. Is your soul at peace? Are you anxious? Are you exhausted? Do you need extra time to rest in God? What does this look like for you? Maybe it means taking time to sit alone with Him for a few minutes throughout your day. Perhaps it means planning an afternoon getaway or an overnight retreat. Maybe your spouse is exhausted and needs time away with God. Possibly you need to encourage a getaway together. It could be your kids who need a weekend of rest. Plan time to rest with God. Take this time to pray for God's direction. Ask God to help you plan time with Him throughout your day. Ask Him to help you plan extended time with Him for you and/or your family. Ask for His guidance and His direction.

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:36**.



WEEK 4, Thursday

Please read the sixth chapter of Mark.

In [Mark 6:45–52](#), we learn that Jesus was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars in the water, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn, He went out to them, walking on the lake. Scripture tells us that He was about to pass them by. Why do you think that is? When the disciples saw Jesus, they were terrified. Jesus recognized that they were afraid. He told them in verse 50, take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid. As Jesus climbed into the boat with them, the wind died down. In the storms of life, as we surrender our anxious hearts to Jesus, and make Him King. He settles our souls. He brings His light, His life, His love, and His perspective.

Please take time to read the account of this same story in [Matthew 14:22–33](#). When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, he asked Jesus if he could do the same. Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. [Matthew 14:30](#) tells us that when Peter's eyes left Jesus and instead began to focus on the wind, Peter began to sink. This is the same for us. When our focus continues to be centered on the storm, we will sink in despair. When instead, we focus on Jesus and in prayer for Him to work in and through the storm, our perspective changes. How do you need to turn your focus away from your own anxiety and instead look with expectancy to God in worship, in His Word and in prayer. Reflect on this today. Bring all of your anxiety to Him. Look to Him with expectancy of how He is going to work. Believe He is good!



Please continue to memorize [Mark 8:36](#)

WEEK 4, Friday

Please read **Mark 6:45-52**.

Today we are going to focus on **verse 52**: *'for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.'* Immediately before the disciples witnessed Jesus walking on the water, they witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the 5000.

Please read **6:30-44**.

If the disciples had understood the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5000, they would not have been overcome by Jesus walking to them on the water during the storm. They would have believed Jesus as the Son of God, and they would have recognized His power to do anything, including walking across the sea. Think about your own life. How has God demonstrated His Presence? How has He shown himself to you? Though the disciples witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the 5000, they did not allow the reality of Jesus to sink in. Instead, shortly after we find them astonished and overwhelmed as Jesus walks to them on the sea. Instead of believing Him through the miracle of the loaves and the fish, or believing in Him as He walked to them on the water, they continued to be afraid. This can be the experience of each of us. We can have the understanding of the miracle of God's forgiveness, but be unwilling to see the miracle of transformation as He changes us from the inside out. In our day, some of the greatest miracles and evidence of Jesus are revealed through life change. How is God changing you? Do you see the miracle of His work as He guides your beliefs, your attitudes, and your heart to a place of surrender? Where are you on your journey? Where have you been? Where do you desire God to work? Rejoice in this miracle today. Don't miss it! Think of Jesus, walking across the sea and think of yourself walking in His ways rather than in your own. This is our miracle! We don't want to miss the miracle of our life continuing to change in Christ. Journal about this today. Spend time in prayer. Ask God to show you the ways He is changing you and ask Him to help you take your next step in Him.

Journal Here:

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:36**.

WEEK 4 “ The Storms ” Group Discussion Points
PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

Split up in partners, and recite your memory verse **Mark 8:36** to one another. Next, we will challenge you to recite all three verses: **Mark 8:34–36**. If someone in your group can do all three today, give them a standing ovation!

Please read **Mark 4:35-41** as a group.

1. What jumped out at you through the message this weekend?
2. Storms in life can form unexpectedly as did the squall we read about in **Mark 4:35–41**. How have storms formed in your life? Give some examples of life storms.
3. As these storms developed around you, how did you feel? Were you frightened? Were you overwhelmed, anxious, lonely? Did you feel as if God had left you? As the storm in **Mark 4:35–41** rose, the disciples woke Jesus who was sleeping in the stern on a cushion. Their words to Him express their desperation: ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ In the midst of a storm, can you relate to the disciples’ reaction?
4. Jesus was not worried. He was not anxious. He trusted God. How and where do you need to trust God in the storms in your own life?
5. How has God used storms to change you? What have you learned through life's storms?

Please read **Mark 6:45-52** as a group.

6. In this Scripture, Jesus saw the disciples straining at the oars because the wind was against them. He went out to them, walking on the lake, but Scripture says He was about to pass them by. Talk about why Jesus would have continued walking on the lake alone. Why do you think this would be?
7. Jesus stopped and climbed into the boat. Why did He do that? What happened when He did? Compare this to our own lives. Do we cry out to Jesus as the storms of life terrify us? Are we honest with Him? Are we honest with ourselves? Be honest with one another. Take time to pray for each other.

WEEK 5: “ Going Home ” Mark 5:1-20

Mark 5:1–20 (ESV)

Jesus heals a Man with a Demon

1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. **2** And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. **3** He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, **4** for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. **6** And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. **7** And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” **8** For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” **9** And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” **10** And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. **11** Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, **12** and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” **13** So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. **14** The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. **15** And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. **16** And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. **17** And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. **18** As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. **19** And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” **20** And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

If you were unable to attend this weeks services please watch the message online at: centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend Message Notes:

WEEK 5, Monday

Recite [Mark 8:34-36](#) by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these verses. Take time to read through [Mark chapters 7 and 8](#) this week.

For today's devotion, please read [Mark 5: 1-6](#).

After the disciples witnessed Jesus calming the wind and the waves, they went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. As Jesus got out of the boat, a demon possessed man came out of the tombs to meet Him. Imagine for a minute what this man's life would have been like. He lived alone in the tombs. No one could bind him, not even with the chain because he tore the chains apart and even broke irons on his feet. He was so violent, no one was able to subdue him. For this reason he lived alone in the tombs in the hills, spending his nights and his days crying out and cutting himself with stones. Right away from a distance, the man saw Jesus. Scriptures say he ran to Jesus and fell on his knees in front of Him. Don't let the significance of this past you by. The man ran to Jesus and fell before Him! The man knew that his only hope was Jesus. Do you need to run to Jesus today? What is going on in your life that only He has the answers for? Maybe it isn't you, but your loved one marred in addiction. It could be that you have a friend buried in brokenness. Whether it is you, or someone you love, we can all run to Jesus. He will bring light and life to any darkness. This is why Jesus came, not only for our eternal salvation, but for our healing here on this earth. Please read [Mark 5:7-20](#) and focus on the man and his healing in Jesus. Take notice in verse 15 that the man was sitting, dressed and in his right mind. Now read [Isaiah 61:1-3](#) and also [Luke 4:14-21](#). Pray these words of Isaiah and Luke today, understanding who Jesus is as healer. See the hope we have in Jesus. Pray the words of Isaiah as well as Luke over your own life and/or over the lives of those you know. Thank Jesus for the hope and healing we have in Him. Believe Him to work in every way for healing in His way and in His time. It may not look like we think it will or should, but God will work in every way as we trust Him.



Continue to work on your memory verses: [Mark 8:34-36](#).

WEEK 5, Tuesday

Please read **Mark 5:1-20**.

In verse 14 those tending the pigs ran off and reported what had happened, to the people of the town as well as those in the countryside. All the people went to see what had happened. Verse 15 explains that as the people arrived they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed sitting, dressed, and in his right mind. Instead of rejoicing for the man, they were afraid. Why do you think they were afraid? Think about their reaction to Jesus. Rather than begging Him to stay, they begged Him to leave their region. Why do you think this is their reaction? Compare this reaction to our own. How might this be true of us today? Jesus healed the man by sending the demons into the pigs which in turn sent 2000 pigs rushing down the steep bank into the lake in which they drowned. Understandably, this would be shocking to witness. Honestly, the reaction of the townspeople and those in the countryside is one we can identify with. Sometimes the way Jesus brings about His work and His healing isn't the way we expect. In those times, it is important we don't let our fear get in the way of God's work. For example, someone struggling with addiction may need to hit rock bottom before they will truly take steps out of the addiction. In our minds, we may feel that keeping them from hitting the bottom is the best way. The problem is, when we continue to keep them from hitting the bottom, they can't see how desperately they need God. As followers of Christ, we need to follow His direction. His ways may not always make sense to us. His word says His ways are not ours and His thoughts are not our thoughts (**Isaiah 55:8**). What we can know, is that His ways are ultimately good, though they might not seem to be so in the moment. It didn't seem good to the townspeople that 2000 pigs were lost, but for the man, this meant everything! His life was saved, and his story led many to see. In what ways do you need to let God be God today? What do you need to let go of? Maybe for you healing looks one way, but God is taking you or your loved one down a different path. This can be incredibly hard to understand. Our world will quickly usher Jesus away, just like the people in this region. In those moments we can look to the world and its ways, or we can look to Jesus and trust Him even though we don't understand. God is good and He loves us. Pray through any situations, circumstances, and life struggles that need God's healing. Release your specific ways of healing to God. Instead of trusting in a specific outcome, trust Him. Give back to Him all that is His and let go of being in control. He knows your heart and knows you want to do what you can to help. Ultimately, though, His work may require a completely different path than the one we want to walk on. This is why we must follow Him instead of ourselves. Pray about this today. Bring specific prayer requests to your group this week.

Recite **Mark 8:34-36** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these verses.

WEEK 5, Wednesday

Please read **Mark 5:17**.

The people in the region wanted Jesus to leave. Why do you think this is what they asked for? We talked about one of the reasons yesterday. Think about what other reasons might be true. Sometimes the reason we want Jesus to leave is because we are very comfortable with the way things are. Maybe, we are afraid of what His Presence and leading might expose in us or cost us. It might seem like too much work to do what Jesus is asking. In our minds, it might seem easier to not take the steps He is asking us to take. For example, perhaps He is asking us to seek individual or marriage counseling. Possibly He is asking us to be vulnerable and confess a sin we have been hiding from everyone. Maybe He is asking us to forgive someone who has hurt us, or step into a messy situation to provide His perspective. Whatever it is, sometimes we realize the depth of what He is asking and we would rather ignore it than take a step. Getting out of our comfort zones can be overwhelming. It can shake us and rattle us to a place of fear, distrust, and unbelief. Rather than believing God for the work He will do, we decide it is much easier to stay where we are. Yes, the steps God might be asking us to take may seem incredibly hard. They also may be steps we honestly don't want to take. Whatever the reason, we can ignore Jesus' call if we so choose. We can be like the townspeople in the story and can ask Him to leave, not just by our words necessarily, but also by our actions. Reflect on this truth today. Where in your life is God asking you to take a step? Are you ignoring Him? If so, why do you think this is true? This is incredibly hard to admit. We may do everything in our power to squelch the conviction of the Holy Spirit at work within us. If this is true of you today, confess and tell God where you are. Be honest. Spend time in prayer telling Him everything you are thinking, feeling, and experiencing. As you share where you are with Him, ask Him by His Holy Spirit working within you to help you see the good of what He is asking. Ask Him to help you begin to take a step in the area He is prompting. If you are comfortable, reach out to your group members and ask for them to pray for you as well. Bring your prayer request to your group, knowing that you are not alone in the journey. God will never leave us or forsake us if we see Him and trust Him with our lives. Pray for strength to follow Him instead of following your own thoughts and feelings.

Recite **Mark 8:34–36** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these verses.

WEEK 5, Thursday

Please read **Mark 5:18-20**.

The man Jesus had healed, begged to go with Jesus. Jesus did not let him. Instead, He sent the man home.

Today and tomorrow we are going to reflect on Jesus' instructions. For today, spend time thinking about the man going home. Think about how he would have felt. Think about how he would have been received by those he knew and loved. Imagine the reunion! What a beautiful gift for this man and his family. What reunions are you longing for in Christ? Do you have family members, friends or loved ones who are distant? Has your faith caused a rift in the relationship? If you long for a reunion with a loved one, lost friend or family member, talk about this with God today. Share all that is in your heart and ask for Him to work to bring the reunion in His time and in His way. Ask for your heart to remain focused on Him as you wait. Spend time in prayer. If the reunion you are dreaming for is with a loved one who has passed away, maybe a grief share group would help you. It helps to be in relationship with others who are experiencing what we are experiencing.

If you know of someone who lost a loved one this past year, take time to write them a note today. Let them know you are thinking of them. It will help them to know they are not alone in their grief. Spend some time praying for them.

Recite **Mark 8:34-36** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these verses.

WEEK 5, Friday

Please read Mark 5:18-20

The man's life was completely and utterly changed by Jesus. The man became a walking, breathing testimony to the power of Christ. For this reason, Jesus said to him in **verse 19**, *“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”* Jesus knew this man, and what he experienced in Christ, would be evidence of God's power to everyone he knew. What about moments in your own journey in which you experienced a new freedom in Christ? As you were amazed by His love, grace, and mercy did you share your story with others? God works through us in our stories to bring His hope to our broken and hurting world. Jesus knew the man's story would bring others to see the amazing hope we have in Jesus. Spend time in prayer, asking God the name of someone specific with whom He desires you to share your story. Maybe He wants you to share your story with your group members as you meet this week. Ask for His will and His direction.

Maybe instead of you sharing your story with someone, God wants you to listen to someone else's story. In **verse 20** it says, *“So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.”* Think about a time you were amazed as someone shared their story with you. If their story was a catalyst in leading you to a relationship with Christ, write them a note of thanks today. Maybe the story He wants you to hear will be from one of your group members as you meet this week. Be attentive to how He is at work. Spend time talking with Him in prayer. Ask Him how He might work either through you sharing your own story, or through another by you hearing their story this week.

Recite **Mark 8:34–36** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these verses.

WEEK 5: “ Going Home ” Group Discussion Points

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

For this week, partner up and share the memory verse **Mark 8:34–36** with someone with whom you haven't done so yet. If someone is struggling to put the verses to memory, encourage them with different ideas that have worked for you. Send texts, emails and snail mail notes, encouraging one another to continue on in memorization.

Please read Mark 5:1–20 as a group.

In verse 14 we read that those tending the pigs ran off and reported what had happened to the people of the town as well as those in the countryside. All the people who heard what occurred, came to see Jesus and what transpired with the man. Verse 15 explains that as the people arrived, they saw the man who had been demon possessed, sitting, dressed, and in his right mind next to Jesus. Instead of rejoicing for the man, they were afraid. Why do you think they were afraid? Think about their reaction to Jesus. Rather than begging Him to stay, they begged Jesus to leave their region. Why do you think this was their reaction? Do you think the people in the village wanted things to stay the way they were? Do you think this is why they asked Jesus to leave? Do you think if they had the choice, they would rather the man stay in the tombs instead of being healed and back in the village? Why do you think this would be true? Compare this reaction to your own. How might this be true of us? Have there been times when you weren't excited for the changes Christ was making in someone? Maybe as Christ was changing someone you know, you were angry at them for changing because you felt jealous about – or even personally convicted by – what you saw Jesus doing in them. Did you respond negatively as they responded to Jesus? How? Have there been times in your own life in which friends and/or family responded negatively to you as you responded to Jesus? How?

Please read Isaiah 61:1-3 as well as Luke 4:14–20.

How do these verses encourage you? Jesus came to do all that is listed in these verses. Go through each statement and talk about each one as a group. Jesus said to the man in verse 19 of our study this week, *“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”* How is Christ working in your life? Take time to share stories of how He is changing you. Maybe you want to share a story of praise for how God is changing someone you know. How does the change God is making in them excite you? As you end your time together, give God praise for the way He is at work. Pray for whose story He might be wanting you to hear, or to whom He might be asking for you to share your story. Pray for someone specific God wants you to talk to.

WEEK 6: “ Inside ” Mark 7:14-23

Mark 7:14–23 (ESV)

What Defiles a Person

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: **15** There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” **17** And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. **18** And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, **19** since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) **20** And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. **21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22** coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend Message Notes:

(Did you notice there is no verse 16 in the ESV? There is a verse 16 in the NASB— 16 “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”)

WEEK 6, Monday

Please begin to memorize Mark 8:37.

Take time to read through Mark chapters 9 and 10 this week.

To know and become like Jesus, we must let Him into our inner life. He knows our thoughts, and He knows all that we are feeling. In the passage we are studying this week, **Mark 7:14–23**, Jesus is trying to explain this to the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They believed following rules made them righteous. In God's eyes, it is our inner life that matters. What overflows from our thoughts? Where do our motivations come from? As we fully rely on God and His Holy Spirit within us, He will work to change us from the inside out. Instead of evil thoughts and wickedness, God will bring His thoughts and His goodness. Instead of sexual immorality and adultery, God will bring His holiness and His purity. Instead of coveting, envy, pride, slander, and deceit, we experience love for others. Theft and murder are dismissed as the evil they are. With Jesus at the center of our life, foolishness leaves and God's divine wisdom comes in its place. What is important is to focus on Jesus, His character, His ways, His thoughts and His life as our example. This is what it means to follow Him. As we follow Him, He changes us. How are you struggling with this concept? What is it about Jesus' ways that frustrate you? Are you angry you can't do this on your own? Why is dependence on Him difficult? Jesus wants what is best for us. It can be hard for us to see. Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you how He is at work within you. Are you struggling in sin? If you have done your best to shut Him out, ask Him to work to help you surrender. Ask Him to help you see His love, His goodness, and His will for you. Sit with Him and rest in His grace and mercy. Thank Him that you are His child and ask Him to remind you of this truth over and over this week as you spend time with Him. Ask Him His next step as He continues to change you from the inside out.

Please continue to work on your memory verses: Mark 8:34-37.

WEEK 6, Tuesday

Please read Romans 7:21-25

In verse 22, we are reminded that in our inner being we delight in God's law. When we give our lives to Christ, we become a new creation in Him. We can rejoice that in Jesus, we are moving toward who we really are and who we continue to become in Him. As each new day begins, we remind ourselves of this truth, and we yield to the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us. Take time today to write a personal prayer expressing this to God. Plan to pray it each morning as you begin your day. Praying this prayer doesn't mean you won't make a mistake. It doesn't mean you will be perfect. Being perfect is impossible. Only Jesus was perfect. We will never be perfect until we are with Him. What we can be though is yielded to Him with the power of His Spirit at work within us. This is what we ask for and depend on. We begin our day with Him and then throughout the day we ask for His help as we face all kinds of trials and temptations. Jesus changing us from the inside out happens through our relationship with Him. Spend time in reflection, writing your personal prayer. Plan how you will use it each morning as you begin your day. Maybe place it next to your coffee pot. Maybe it would be best to tape it to your bathroom mirror, or have it hanging by your car keys. How will you best remember to pray before your day begins? More importantly, how will the prayer help you remember that He is at work in you throughout the day as you depend on Him? Maybe you want multiple copies of your prayer scattered throughout your home, car, and office just to continue to remind you.

My Prayer:



Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:37**.

WEEK 6, Wednesday

When you hear the word confession, what do you think about? Does the idea of confession bring a feeling of guilt, or do you know nothing about the practice of confession?

Please read 1 John 1: 8–10.

As we confess our sins to God, he forgives us. **James 5:16** also says, *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”* As we confess to God, as well as one another, God is at work to bring forgiveness and healing. Do you have anything you need to confess before God and/or another person in your life today? The reality is that we need to confess. Confession clears the air and allows the Holy Spirit’s Presence to be full. Sin hinders our relationships. It blocks the work God is doing in our inner life and it becomes a stumbling block in our relationship with Him and with others. Once we understand that God waits expectantly for our hearts to be open before Him, we can share with Him all that is going on in our life. We can be people who are honest before Him, and those we are closest to, not hiding things or pretending things are different than they are. This is how growth happens. Confession helps us be honest with God, honest with our self and honest with others. Confession renews our general dependence on God.

Please read Psalm 51.

Take time to pray it as your own. Rejoice in how God creates a pure heart and renews a steadfast spirit within us as we are honest with Him and with others. Thank Him for His work as He continues to grow us and change us from the inside out. Please also refer to **Psalm 119: 25–32** as you pray honestly and earnestly before the Lord.

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:37**.

WEEK 6, Thursday

Please read **Proverbs 3:3**.

Obviously, this verse is not to be taken literally. What do you think King Solomon meant when he said, “Write love and faithfulness on the tablet of your heart”? As Jesus shared in the verses we are studying out of Mark this week, our heart is what God is after. In fact, if we turn back a few verses in our reading in chapter 7 we see Jesus quote from Isaiah as He spoke with the Pharisees. In **Mark 7:6–7** Jesus says, “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teaching are merely human rules.*” God wants our hearts to be His, and we can lose sight of this by focusing on rules and not allowing God to truly change us from the inside out. In **Proverbs 3:11–12**, we understand the Lord disciplines those He loves. He does so because He loves us and does not want us worshiping Him in vain. His goal is not for us to follow religious rules, it is to change us to be people who love and are faithful to Him above all else. If we do not confess, and continue to harbor sin or in some cases remain unaware of where we are on our journey, God will bring us to a place of discipline alongside His immeasurable grace. He does so because He loves us and He wants what is best for us. **Hebrews 4:7b** “*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.*” How is God speaking to you through the devotions this week? Take time to reflect and let Him do the work He desires to do in your inner being.

Please continue to memorize **Mark 8:37**.



WEEK 6, Friday

What does it mean to be humble? What does it mean to live a life of humility?

[Write your thoughts here:](#)

Humble:

Humility:

Remember: humility is not about beating yourself up. It is about coming to terms with yourself so that you can forget yourself, in order to become more aware of God, and more aware of yourself in relation to God. Pride puffs up a person, but pride also comes when we are constantly degrading ourselves. When our focus is only on ourselves, good or bad, we are falling into the trap of pride. In Scripture, we know that God shows favor to the humble (**Proverbs 3:34**). To truly live out Jesus' teaching in **Mark 7:14–23**, humility is the key. Why do you think this is true? Humble people acknowledge their weaknesses. They confess their struggles. A humble heart is fertile ground for God's work. This was King David's greatest asset.

Please read 1 Samuel 16:7.

God chose David because of his heart. David wasn't perfect, but his heart was humble before God and fertile soil for God to work. All we have been learning this week requires our hearts to be moldable, and pliable before God. It requires humility. If the devotions have been hard for you the past few days, consider your state in regards to humility. Where is your heart in this area? Humble hearts are hearts God can work through to bring the inner change He desires. Ask God how to take a step towards Him in humility. Ask how your heart can become a more fertile place for His work. Spend time with Him in prayer. Ask Him to lead and guide you in the area of humility.

WEEK 6: “ Inside ” Group Discussion Points

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

Recite the memory verse **Mark 8:37**. This verse is shorter than the other verses in this passage, but it offers an incredibly compelling question. Discuss the memory verses **Mark 8:34–37** to this point. What challenges your heart as you put these verses to memory? Discuss this as a group before you move on to discussing the questions.

Please read **Mark 7:14–23** as a group.

To know and become like Jesus, we must let Him into our inner life. He knows our thoughts, and He knows all that we are feeling. In this passage, Jesus is trying to explain this to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They believed following rules, made them righteous. In God's eyes, it is our inner life that matters. What is important is our focus on Jesus, His character, His ways, His thoughts and His life as our example. This is what it means to follow Him. As we follow Him, He changes us from the inside out. How are you struggling with this concept? What is it about Jesus' ways that frustrate you? Are you angry you can't do this on your own? Why is dependence on Him difficult?

If we turn back a few verses in our reading in chapter 7, we see Jesus quote from Isaiah as He spoke with the Pharisees. In **Mark 7:6–7** Jesus says, *“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* Do you see how easily we can take this path as we focus on rules and behavior rather than on God? How has this been your experience? If you grew up in a tradition that leans into following religious rules, how has this affected your relationship with Christ?

When you hear the word confession, what do you think about? Does confession bring a feeling of guilt, or do you know nothing about the practice of confession? Please read **1 John 1:8–10** and **James 5:16**. When we confess to God and to one another, God brings forgiveness and healing. Talk about this as a group. Is confession something you practice? Do you confess to God? Do you have someone in your life who hears your deeper struggles? This is one of the reasons community is so important. Share with the group how God has worked for your good through the area of confession in your life.

Confession is all about a humble heart before the Lord. Pride will always get in the way. Pride comes as we think too highly of ourselves. Pride can also come as we continually degrade ourselves. Whenever our focus is constantly on ourselves, we are walking away from humility. Talk about this truth as a group and, if you are willing, share what these issues have looked like in your own life.

How do we stay on a path of humility? God looks at the heart. A huge piece of staying humble comes when we keep our heart softened by looking away from ourselves and toward God, focusing on and following the example of Christ so that God can continually work to change us and mold us to become more like Jesus. Share a specific area in which you desire to have humility and commit to pray for each other this week.

WEEK 7: “ Transfigured ” Mark 9:2-13

Mark 9:2–13 (ESV)

The Transfiguration

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, **3** and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. **4** And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. **5** And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” **6** For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. **7** And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” **8** And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only. **9** And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. **10** So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. **11** And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” **12** And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? **13** But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend Message Notes:

WEEK 7: Monday

Recite **Mark 8:34-37** by memory as best you can. Continue to work on these verses.

Take time to read through **Mark chapters 11 and 12** this week.

For today, please read **Mark 9:2-13**.

The Transfiguration. In the Transfiguration, we are reminded of who Christ is as the Son of God. Imagine yourself high on the mountain looking at Christ's Transfiguration alongside Peter, James and John. Picture Jesus' clothes becoming dazzling white, far whiter than any bleach could make them. Think about how striking Jesus' physical appearance would have been; at this time in history, Jesus' disciples were only acquainted with sunlight and firelight, and at night, moonlight. There was no electricity and no other source of ambient light. Imagine how the dazzling white light of Christ would have taken their breath away. Imagine also, how seeing Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus would have created great awe in the disciples. Peter fumbled with his words because he was overcome with what he was seeing and experiencing. As you picture yourself on the mountain, standing by Peter, hear God's voice coming from the cloud above you "This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!" He who was God became the Son of Man. As the Son of Man, Jesus' Glory is hidden, but as the Son of God, His Glory is revealed. Son of Man is humanity. Son of God is Divinity. Peter, James and John were in awe of Jesus' Divinity. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus continually identifies himself as the Son of Man. Only His Father God identifies Him as the Son of God. Why do you think this is? Today, think about Jesus as Son of God. Contemplate how often His Glory was hidden. In your relationship with God, when you experience God's glory in Jesus, how does it overwhelm you? As you stand in awe, what is your response? Are you quiet? Do you fall on your knees?

Please read **Revelation Chapter 1**.

Verse 17 says John fell at His feet as though dead. What will it be like when we see Christ in all His Glory? Maybe you haven't spent time focusing on God's glory. We are going to talk about this more this week. For today, pray and ask God to open your eyes to more of Jesus' Divinity. Ask God to reveal Himself to you in such a way that you stand in awe, astounded and overcome by Him just as the disciples were on the mountain and as John was in the book of Revelation.

Continue to work on your memory verses: **Mark 8:34-37**.

WEEK 7, Tuesday

Continue to practice and recite from memory Mark 8:34–37.

In the moment of the transfiguration, all the realization of what Jesus left in heaven should bring us to a place of awe. The recognition of Jesus, Son of God, stepping into the confines of our human experience – on our behalf – should overwhelm us, just as Peter, James and John were overwhelmed on the mountain. If we take time to contemplate this, we realize what Jesus gave up on our behalf. It is stunning! As he stepped into the confines of a human body, imagine Him feeling all that we feel and experiencing all we experience. For the first time, Jesus had the limits of time and space. He had to grow up, just like us. He experienced walking for the first time. He most likely fell down and skinned His knees. He had acne. During His life, He had to learn. We know He learned carpentry from Joseph. During that experience, He more than likely smashed His thumb or stubbed His toe. He needed to ask questions as He learned, just like us. Ponder on Jesus, Son of God, being confined and restricted to the limitations of our human experience. If humility is a struggle for us, Jesus' incredible humility brings us a deeper understanding as to why we need to be humble people before God. Jesus is our example. Pray for this understanding to sink deep into your heart this week.



WEEK 7, Wednesday

Continue to practice and recite from memory [Mark 8:34–37](#).

Today we are going to ponder on Jesus' humility.

Please read [Philippians 2:1–11](#). In verses 5–8, Paul tells us Jesus made Himself nothing. He took on the very nature of a servant. He was made in human likeness and as a man He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross. Jesus was uniquely able to be atonement, because He was the Son of Man and the Son of God. Jesus' humanity as the Son of Man, allowed His life to be taken in our place while His Divinity allowed Him to take on the sins of the entire world.

Death on a cross was the lowliest of the low in the time of Christ. Christ did that for us. When was the last time you focused on Jesus and the cross? Typically, we do this on Good Friday, but if we are honest, not much more than that, other than possibly during times of communion throughout the rest of the year. Today, focus on Jesus and His death on the cross. Throughout Mark, Jesus predicts His death. Without Jesus' death and resurrection, we have no hope. Our eternity is secure because of what Jesus did for us. Is this something you understand? Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?

God is holy. He can have no interaction with sin. Yet sin entered our world, and everything has been affected. Jesus entered our world in the most humbling means as a baby, born in a manger. He grew up as a human being and when the time came, He was obedient to death on a cross. Why? Because He knew that His death was the only way to bridge humanity back to His Father. We have an eternity with God, because Jesus gave His life in our place. His death pays the penalty for our sin, creating a way for us to be reunited with God. We are washed clean because of Jesus' blood shed on the cross.

Let's explore the distinction that baptism creates. At the moment of baptism, a profound spiritual transformation takes place. Baptism doesn't save us. Only Jesus does that. God's grace saves us through our faith, but the individual, surrounded by the presence of God, declares, I'm leaving my old life behind. God is giving me a new heart. My sin has been forgiven. I've been reconciled with God. I've been made new, and I want to follow Jesus. This declaration signifies a complete surrender to God's will and a commitment to live a new life in Christ.

When we are baptized, we are saying, I'm giving my life to follow Him. I want to do what He wants me to do. I want to go where He wants me to go. I want to be who He's made me to be. It's not just a ritual but a powerful sacrament that separates Jesus' fans from true followers. Those who are baptized are not just admirers of Jesus but individuals who are wholeheartedly committed to following Him.

Think back on the baptisms you have seen. Do you feel inspired to take a step toward baptism? If you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, talk to your group leader. If you are not in a group, you can talk with a church leader to decide your next steps.

If you are a follower of Christ, marvel at the cross today. Allow the beauty of what Christ has done for us to bring you back to the truth of who Christ is as our Lord. Celebrate your salvation. If possible, spend time in worship. Take a walk in His creation, or listen to your favorite worship song and/or songs. Jesus gave His life for us. What a glorious gift to have been given in Christ. Spend time worshiping Him today. Thank Him for humbling Himself, leaving Heaven, becoming human and giving His life so that we would be saved through Him.

WEEK 7, Thursday

Continue to practice and recite from memory **Mark 8:34–37**.

As we acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, this brings glory to God, the Father. As Jesus is glorified on the mountain, and in His death and resurrection, we see the glory Moses desperately wanted to see so long ago.

Please read **Exodus 33:12–22**.

When Jesus was on the mountain during the Transfiguration, His clothes became dazzling white. When Moses came down off the mountain after experiencing God's glory, we read in **Exodus 34:29–35**, that his face was so radiant the Israelites were afraid. God's glory is more than we can comprehend. His holiness and goodness are more than we can take in. The one thing that we do know is that we surrender to Jesus as we spend time with Him in prayer and His Word, His light shines through us in such a way to bring God glory. By His Spirit at work in us, God's goodness is displayed to our world.

In C.S. Lewis' book, "The Weight of Glory" he says on pages 25–26, "We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; ...if there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

The Glory of God transforms us. Our destiny is to be made dazzling white like Christ was on the mountain. As we follow Christ, more and more, we share in His glory as He is at work changing us from the inside out. Do you believe this truth today? Maybe it is too much for you to believe. If each of us were able to grasp this truth, we would move from making mud pies in a slum to the holiday that is waiting for us at sea. God wants to move us out of our brokenness. He is calling us to a new life in Him. Why do you think this is so hard for us to believe? Is it because we see a life of our own creation, maybe the American dream rather than a life committed to Christ? Think about this today. What are you living for? Why? Do you see how a deep relationship with God transforms us and gives us true life in Him? As we experience His Glory, the other means of satisfaction fall away. Nothing compares to what we have in Christ. Spend time in prayer about this today.

WEEK 7, Friday

Please read **Matthew 5:14–15**.

14 *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.”*

How does the light of Christ shine through you? Sometimes we imagine that the things we do in Christ need to be big and overwhelming. The truth is, what we need to do is simply live in Him. One of the ways we can do this, more than any other, is to live with a mindset of Christ’s worthiness. He gave His life for us, and if we live with a heart of gratitude and love for Him, the worthiness He deserves, becomes paramount in our lives. This brings Him glory. People see Him in us in our everyday love for one another.

As we read about the disciples throughout Mark, do you think their response to Jesus exhibited the worthiness Jesus deserved? What about our own behavior today? As we follow Christ, it is important that we remind ourselves of the worthiness of Christ. Spend time contemplating Christ’s worthiness today. If possible, sit quietly with Him. Think about all He has done on our behalf. Thank Him for His great love. Thank Him for the way He works in our inner life to display His glory. In prayer, share with Him an area of your life in which you desire His worthiness to change you and help you take a step, so that more of His glory shines through you.

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Continue to practice and recite from memory **Mark 8:34–37**.



WEEK 7: “ Transfigured ” *Group Discussion Points*

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

Begin your time together reciting the memory verse. Have each member of your group recite **Mark 8:34–37** if they are able. Encourage those who are having difficulty putting the verses to memory. Share memory tips as a group.

Read Mark 9:2-13.

1. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus identifies himself as the Son of Man. Only His Father God identifies Him as the Son of God. Why do you think this is? Talk about this as a group.
2. Think about Jesus as Son of God. Contemplate how often His glory was hidden. In your relationship with God, when you experience, God’s glory in Jesus, how does it overwhelm you? What is your response? Compare it to the disciple’s response on the mountain. What will it be like when we see Christ in all His Glory? Can we even comprehend our future in Him?
3. In the moment of the transfiguration, all the realization of what Jesus left in heaven should bring us to a place of awe. Jesus, Son of God, stepping into the confines of our human experience – on our behalf. Talk about Jesus, Son of God, being confined and restricted to the limitations of our human experience. What would that have meant for Him? Share examples as a group. Some examples are listed in Day 2 of the devotions if you would like to refer back.
4. The glory of God transforms us. Our destiny is to be made dazzling white, like Christ was on the mountain. As we follow Christ, more and more, we share His glory as He is at work, changing us from the inside out. Do you believe this truth today? Maybe it is too much for you to believe. God wants to move us out of our brokenness. He is calling us to a new life in Him. Why do you think this is so hard for us to believe? Is it because we see a life of our own creation, maybe the American dream rather than a life committed to Christ? Talk about this as a group. What are you living for? Why? Do you see how a deep relationship with God transforms us and gives us true life in Him.
5. When was the last time you focused on Jesus and the cross? Typically, we do this on Good Friday, but if we are honest, it might just be during times of communion throughout the rest of the year. Throughout Mark, Jesus predicts His death. His death and resurrection are everything for us. Without Jesus' death and resurrection, we have no hope. Our eternity is secure because of what Jesus did for us. In the first message in the Find and Follow series last month, Pastor Aaron reminds us that the most important decision in your life is what you do with God's offer – with what you do with Jesus and the offer of new life we are given in Him. Pastor Aaron asks, “What have you done with God's offer? Do you know that the only way we are made right with God is through Jesus? In believing in Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection, we are forgiven and reconciled to God in love. We are made new, and we begin to follow Jesus. Have you made an intentional decision to follow Jesus? If so, how does following him look in your life, if not, what is holding you back?
6. Celebrate communion as a group. If possible, spend time in worship together.

WEEK 8: “ Rich and Young ” Mark 10:17-31

Mark 10:17–31 (ESV)

17 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?” **18** And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. **19** You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’ ” **20** And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” **21** And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” **22** Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. **23** And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” **24** And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! **25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” **26** And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?” **27** Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” **28** Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” **29** Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, **30** who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. **31** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at: centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend Message Notes:

WEEK 8: Monday

Have the memory verses prodded you to change the way you look at your life? If someone were to ask you, “what do these verses mean?” What would you say?

Take time to read through Mark chapters 13 and 14 this week.

Please read Mark 10:17–31.

In these verses, the rich young ruler falls on his knees, and asks Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Through his question, we see his hope that his own religious and moral performance are the reasons he felt worthy to be included in Jesus' kingdom. As Jesus shares a few of the 10 Commandments with him, the young man's confidence rises. With sincerity, he believes he has done all Jesus has asked. Do you ever wish eternity was based on your effort to live up to a moral or religious standard? Why? Often we want to be in control and we don't want to depend on anyone else.

Many of the other world religions are based on following rules and our efforts to make God happy. What is the distinct difference we have in Christianity? For us, eternal life is a gift. We do not have to earn our way to God. This is what Jesus means in 10:27. Salvation is the complete work of God. Every attempt to have eternal life based on our work is useless. God does not expect us to follow a checklist. Instead, as Christians, we believe and follow the person of Jesus Christ. It is in our relationship with Him that we find our identity.

The reason Jesus told the young man in verse 21 *“Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor”* is because the man's identity and security was in his wealth, power, and religious behavior. Where do you find your identity?

If our security and identity are wrapped up in our job, or if we find our worth in being a parent, having an education, having a position, or possibly a title, we will seek to create an image that lives up to that identity. Jesus wants our identity to be in Him so that we can be real and give up trying to create an image. Talk about this with God in your quiet time today. Ask Him to reveal the source of your identity. Ask Him to show you the things you do to protect the image you have created. As He does, don't let your face fall as the man in the story did. Instead, discover the beautiful gift of living in the gift of the eternal as God's children.

Continue to work on your memory verses, memorizing Mark 8:34-37.

WEEK 8: Tuesday

Please re-read our verses from this week, **Mark 10:17–31**. Pay special attention to **verse 21**, “*Jesus looked at him and loved him.*” It is so easy to miss this part of the story. The temptation is to focus on either what Jesus says, or on the man walking away sad. If we miss the beginning of **verse 21**, we miss the heart of the story.

Jesus loved the man. He did not love him for what he did, but He loved him for who he was and who he would become. Do you ever have trouble receiving God's love? Do you feel the need to earn His love? Are you able to see something different through this story?

Jesus doesn't want us to try to earn His love. Instead, He wants us to love Him above all else. Do you see the difference? **Matthew 22:36–38** says, “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.*” Jesus extended His love to the rich young ruler. Instead of wholeheartedly, returning Jesus' love, the rich young ruler, mistakenly chose wealth, power, and religious behavior as his first love, in Jesus' place. Is there anything or anyone you have loved more than you love God? God desires for us to take drastic action in our relationship with Him, rooting everything out that would get in the way of wholeheartedly, returning His love.

Reflect on a time when you knew God was asking you to make a change. Think about what changed after you were obedient to Him. How are you different because of the work He has been doing in your life? Celebrate and thank God for the change.

Maybe there is an action He is asking you to take now. Remember, this action is not to earn His love, but rather to remove any obstacles that would keep you from fully giving and receiving God's love. Are you willing? If not, talk with Him about why this might be. Ask Him for His help. Do you believe that He wholeheartedly loves you? Do you believe His path for you is good?

End your time today, by lifting your head and rejoicing in the truth of how much God loves you. Ask Him to show you His love and ask Him for the courage to wholeheartedly love Him in return.

Continue to work on your memory verses, Mark 8:34-37.

WEEK 8, Wednesday

Please read Mark 8:28. Look back and read chapter 1:16–20 as well.

The rich young ruler's wealth blinded him from seeing his own poverty. Each of us are poor in some aspect of our life. We can be poor relationally, spiritually, and emotionally. We can be poor in joy and thanksgiving, in perspective and in contentment. The truth is we can have poverty even when everything on the surface of our life seems to be going well. Sometimes our material wealth can fool us into thinking we have it all together when the truth is, we are deeply broken and need God's healing.

Where is poverty exposing itself in your life today? How are you poor? Remember, it might not be material poverty. Maybe you can remember a time when you realized your own internal or external poverty. How did embracing your poverty allow you to experience the love and embrace of Christ?

Spend time journaling. Write about what we have been learning these past two days. What is God showing you? How are you receiving this teaching? It is OK to be honest with Him, just as the rich young ruler was. The mistake the rich young ruler made was walking away. As you write, ask God for His help to let go of what might be in the way of you seeing your own poverty. Pray for Him to reveal what you might need to let go of so that you can wholeheartedly follow Him.

Journal Here:

Continue to work on your memory verses, memorizing Mark 8:34-37.

WEEK 8, Thursday

Please read [Mark 10:29–30](#).

The life of discipleship is a combination of promise and uncertainty, sanctification and struggle. God works through the uncertainty and struggle to bring restoration and hope. Make a list of all the ways you are thankful. What promises has He made to you? How has He walked you through times of uncertainty? What blessings have come through your journey with Christ? How have your struggles brought restoration and hope?

Create your list here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Spend time in prayer thanking God for all of the ways He is at work in your life. If this is a struggle for you, reflect on why this is true. If your circumstances are not what you believe they could or should be, recognize that our circumstances don't express God's love. His love comes through Jesus. This is why a deep relationship with Jesus will provide us with more than we could ever imagine, and it won't happen in our mere circumstances, but in our inner life.

Continue to work on your memory verses, [Mark 8:34-37](#).

WEEK 8, Friday

Please read [Mark 10:31](#).

Today as we follow Christ, it is important to note that being first isn't what is important. Many who are first by the world's standards will be last in the Kingdom of God. Why do you think this is true? Does this trouble you? Does it bring you peace? The life of discipleship is characterized by humble and loving service, which is often the opposite of what we find in the world. The best in Jesus comes as we follow behind Him, staying in step with His leading. Is that hard for you to accept? If so, what makes it so hard? Do you want what you want right now? Why is it hard to wait?

The disciples struggled with this concept too. Look back to [Matthew 9:33–35](#). As you spend time with God today, ask Him to work in your heart. Instead of pushing your agenda, your wishes, your wants, or your position, push all of it to Him in prayer. As you sit with Him, ask for His wisdom and direction as you wait for Him to reveal His “firsts” for you rather than those you would choose for yourself.

Continue to work on your memory verses, memorizing [Mark 8:38](#).



WEEK 8: “ Rich and Young ” *Group Discussion Points*

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

Give everyone in your group a pen and a piece of paper. Race to see who can write out **Mark 8:34-37** from memory. Keep track of who gets done first, second and third. Hold onto this information until the end of your group time.

Please read Mark 10:17–31.

1. In these verses, the Rich young ruler falls on his knees, and asks Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Through his question, we see his hope that his own religious and moral performance are the reason he felt worthy to be included in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus shares a few of the 10 Commandments with him and the young man's confidence rises. With sincerity, he believes he has done all Jesus has asked. Do you ever wish eternity was based on your effort to live up to a moral or religious standard? Why? Often we want to be in control and we don't want to depend on anyone else.
2. The reason Jesus told the young man in verse 21, “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor” is because the man's identity and security was in his wealth, power, and religious behavior. Where do you find your identity?
3. If our security and identity are wrapped up in our job, or if we find our worth in being a parent, having an education, having a position, or possibly a title, we will seek to create an image that lives up to that identity. Jesus wants our identity to be in him so we can be real and give up trying to create an image. Talk about this as a group. Why do people protect the image they create for themselves?
4. The rich ruler's wealth blinded him from seeing his own poverty. Each of us have places of poverty. We can be poor relationally, spiritually, and emotionally. We can be poor, in joy, in thanksgiving, in perspective and in contentment. The truth is we have poverty even when everything on the surface of our life seems to be going well. Where is poverty exposing itself in you today?
5. Can anyone in the group remember a time when you realized your poverty? How did embracing your poverty allow you to experience the love and embrace of Christ?
6. Jesus loved the man. He did not love him for what he did, but He loved him for who he was. Do you have trouble receiving God's love? Do you feel the need to earn His love? Are you able to see something different through the story? Jesus doesn't want us to try to earn His love. Instead, He wants us to love Him above all else. Do you see the difference? Share as a group.
7. The best in Jesus comes as we follow behind Him, staying in step with His leading. Is it hard for you to accept this teaching? As a group, discuss what troubles you about the story of the rich young ruler?

At the beginning of group today you raced to see who could write the memory the fastest. The group members who came in first, second and third, have them stand up. They are in charge of cleaning up from group tonight. Have them pick up the paper and pens that were distributed at the start of group. Have them pick up the dirty dishes, take them to the kitchen and wash and put them away. For the rest of the group, you have additional work. You must come to group next week with all the memory verses written out on a piece of paper. Don't forget!

WEEK 9, “ Offering ” Mark 12:41-44

Mark 12:41–44 (ESV)

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. **42** And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. **43** And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. **44** For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

If you were unable to be present at the weekend service, please watch the message online at: centrallutheran.church/watch

Weekend Message Notes:

WEEK 9, Monday

Take time to read through [Mark chapters 15 and 16](#) this week.

Please read [Mark 12:41–44](#).

Spend some time thinking about [verse 41](#), “*Jesus, sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury.*” Consider Jesus quietly watching the crowd place their offering into the temple treasury. As God, He knew every single thing about each one who came. He knew their thoughts as they approached to give. He intimately knew their lives. He recognized the spirit in which they gave. He knew if their hearts were close to Him in prayer, or distant in religious rules.

What if this coming weekend, as you walk into church, you picture Jesus sitting, watching? What does He see in you? Does He find you expectant to meet with Him? How does He see you in worship? Focused? Dedicated? Preoccupied? Distant? As He watches you listen to the message, does He find you paying attention, occupying yourself on your phone or deep in thought about something else?

Over the last nine weeks, we have been challenged in our commitment to Christ as His disciples. Are we fully following Him? We have asked ourselves, many questions, such as what part of our lives are His and what parts are hidden? As we get ready to end this series, reflect on all that we have learned. If we choose, the widow’s wisdom can be ours as well. As we understand more about her this week, ask yourself this question: what keeps me from giving Jesus everything I have? What keeps me from making Him [King of My Heart](#)? Pray and think about this today.

Work to recite [Mark 8:34–37](#) by memory.

WEEK 9, Tuesday

Please read [Mark 12:41–44](#).

When you read the story of the widow, how does it sit with you? Are you concerned for her? We know that in Jesus' time, widows were in a precarious position. Without a husband or son to care for them, the rules and laws of the time left them abandoned and alone. When you read this woman's story, do you feel afraid for her well-being? Does your mind wander to where she will stay, what she will eat and how she will manage?

The widow trusted God to care for her. Her actions demonstrate her belief. By placing everything she had in the treasury, she showed her trust in God. Do you believe God is trustworthy? How do your actions demonstrate your belief?

Each of us will go through difficult times. We live in a broken and fallen world, and our relationship with Jesus does not protect us from experiencing pain. In the pain, though, we find a deeper trust. In the widow's suffering, she offered everything, trusting that in her time of need God would provide.

True discipleship requires us to give it all. This is why we choose [Mark 8:34–37](#) for our memory verse for this series.

As we focus on the widow in [Mark 12:41–44](#), she demonstrates true discipleship. As she brings her offering, her attitude is one of worship and trust. Ponder on your life today. What do your actions display? Do they reveal a heart of discipleship? Does your attitude reflect one of worship and trust? If not, why? What is holding you back from fully following Jesus? At Central, discipleship is being a fully devoted follower of Jesus. We follow Jesus by praying, reading the Bible, sharing our faith, and serving others by being generous with our time and finances. As you pray, discuss this with God. Maybe you want to follow Him with everything you have, but you don't know how. If this is true, simply tell Him and ask Him to help you. Maybe you realize that you have a hard time trusting God because you have a hard time trusting people. Ask Him for help. Rest in His love today. Listen as He speaks to you through the widow's story.

Work to recite [Mark 8:34–37](#) by memory.

WEEK 9, Wednesday

Please read **Mark 12:41–44**.

The widow's example reminds us that our whole life is meant to be an offering. Is this something you have thought about before? Why or why not? Sometimes when we discuss offering, we automatically think of money. Why do you think this is true? As Jesus' disciples, fully following Him means seeing our life, as an offering back to Him. We give our time, our talents and our financial resources. We want to live our entire lives as Christ followers, with Him at the forefront. Because Jesus gave everything for us, we want to give everything we have and every part of who we are back to Him.

Begin to pray and ask God what He will orchestrate in your mind, heart, and soul as we look to Him for His wisdom and direction for our lives. How does He want you to live? Contemplate His call. Sometimes we imagine living well means moving to a far away land. God might ask that of us, but do we recognize the mission field we live in every day? As we raise our children, go to work, are involved in the community, care for your neighbors, give our time to those in need, and share our story of life change all with Jesus as our focus, are we living it well. Pray about this truth today. Does living your life well invoke images of a life distant from the one you live? God is asking for the life you have now, today, to be one you live well in Him.

Think of some examples of how this is true. Ask God to help you see what living your life as an offering means. Spend time thinking and praying about this today.



**Work to recite
Mark 8:34–37 by memory.**

WEEK 9, Thursday

Please read [Mark 12:41–44](#).

Last week, in the story of the rich young ruler, we discussed that his wealth blinded him from his own poverty. We discussed the different places where we could also experience poverty. We can be poor relationally, spiritually, and emotionally. We can be poor, in joy, in thanksgiving, in perspective and in contentment. In verse 44 of our verses this week we read, *“They gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.”* This week we learned that the distinct difference between the ruler, and the widow is that the widow gave everything out of her poverty. She made God [King of Her Heart](#).

It is important to understand that, as we share God's light and life, fully giving ourselves to those around us, the richest offerings come as we give through our poverty. Author Ann Voskamp articulates this well, *“Instead of trying to put all the broken pieces of your life together again – maybe there's a deeper peace in reaching out to give those broken pieces away.”*

How does this sit with you today? When we experience loss, grief, struggle, and pain, we are tempted to think we have nothing to offer. This is not true. We have everything to offer as we come around those who are also experiencing hurt and pain. We are able to love from authenticity. We are genuine in our care, because we understand. When we offer everything to God, He works through everything for good.

Pray [Romans 8:28](#) today. Ask God to help you understand what it means to fully follow Him, offering everything not simply out of your wealth, but also out of your poverty.

Work to recite [Mark 8:34–37](#) by memory.

WEEK 9, Friday

Please read Mark 12:41–44.

Can you imagine what it would be like if everyone in the Chippewa Valley discovered where they were on their spiritual journey and began to take steps to know and become like Jesus?

Write down some of the changes we would experience in our community:

In the last few weeks of this study, we have been reminded of Jesus' humility in giving His life for us on the cross. We have been challenged to offer ourselves in humility to Him, just as the widow offered everything she had. As we fully follow Christ in humility, we shine His light throughout our community, region, nation and world. When we live for God, His light and life come to all those around us. They see Christ in us, and they see the difference that living for Him makes. How is the Gospel of Mark changing your perspective? How is it challenging your beliefs? What are you hearing from God? Pray about all that you are learning and the steps God is asking you to take as we end this series together. What is your next step?

Work to recite Mark 8:34–37 by memory.

WEEK 9: “ Offering ” Group Discussion Point

PLEASE OPEN WITH PRAYER

To begin, have everyone who had to write out the memory verse last week, pull out their papers. Partner up and use the papers to help each other, recite all of the verses by memory. After everyone practices, use a group member’s phone or iPad to record a video of your group saying the memory verses all together. If you are able to record a video of your group, please share with CLC staff. Collect stories of how God has worked in your groups throughout the series and please email the stories to Laura Garry— laura@central-lutheran.org.

Please read Mark 12:41–44.

1. When you read the story of the widow, how does it sit with you? Are you concerned for her? The widow trusted God to care for her. Her actions demonstrated her belief. By placing everything she had in the treasury, she showed her trust in God. Talk about how our actions demonstrate whether or not we trust in God. What are some examples?
2. As we focus on the widow in **Mark 12: 41–44**, she demonstrates true discipleship. As she brings her offering, her attitude is one of worship and trust. Does your attitude reflect one of worship and trust in God? If not, why? What is holding you back from fully trusting Jesus? Maybe you have a hard time trusting people. How does this affect your trust in God? Talk about this as a group.
3. The widow’s example reminds us that our life is an offering. Is this something you have thought about before? Why or why not? Sometimes when we discuss offering, we automatically think of money. Why do you think this is true?
4. As Jesus’ disciples, fully following Him means seeing our life as an offering back to Him. We give of our time, our talents and our financial resources. We want to live our entire lives as Christ followers, with Him at the forefront. Because Jesus gave everything for us, we want to give everything we have and every part of who we are back to Him. When you think about the life you have been given, what does following Jesus mean to you?
5. Sometimes we imagine that following Jesus means moving to a far away land. God might ask that of us, but do we recognize the mission field we live in every day? As we raise our children, go to work, are involved in the community, care for our neighbors, give our time to those in need, and share our story of life change with Jesus as our focus, we are living well. Does following Jesus invoke images of a life distant from the one you live? Why? Talk about this as a group.
6. Thank you for participating in our journey through Mark. As you end your group meeting, take time to pray for one another and celebrate as a group. Share all that God has done over the last nine weeks! Take some time to plan your next steps as a group – gathering to serve, for a night out, or a casual barbecue. We hope you will continue to meet for our next study series beginning in the fall.

SIGN UP FOR A GOSPEL OF MARK SMALL GROUP

Sunday: (Starts June 9th)

9:30am Nancy Hanson and Chris Sims
Education Room at Central
Email: Nancy@oneapplehill.net

Sunday: (Starts June 9th)

7:00pm Jill Gindt and Kari Roshell
Meeting Virtually on Zoom
Email: jillgindt@gmail.com

Tuesday: (Starts June 11th)

6:30pm Laura Garry
Coffee Area at Central
Email: laura@central-lutheran.org

Wednesday: (Starts June 12th)

10:45am Sue Houkom
Coffee Area at Central
Email: slhoukom@gmail.com

Dwelling in the Word Group

Tom and Jan Drehmel
Meeting Time TBD
Email: tdrehmel@me.com



SCAN HERE

Please start the daily devotionals on **Monday, June 3**.
Gospel of Mark messages will be available online on Sundays.

For serving ideas visit: centrallutheran.church/outreach

