

Living for God in God's World

– making the ordinary special

STUDY NOTES MAY 2014

Good News in East Reading

*God getting worshipped, a lot more people becoming Christians,
the neighbourhood getting blessed and we all get to know God
better in the process*

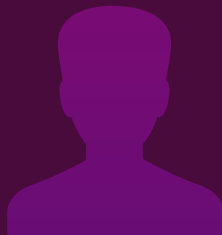
How can God
help in my
challenges?



Can I see
Jesus in my
life?



How can I
follow his
example?



How can I
show Jesus
to others?



WYCLIFFE
BAPTIST CHURCH

Good News in East Reading

These notes are provided as a guide for our collective learning and worship programme at Wycliffe for May 2014. They provide an outline of the Sunday teaching material, and include study notes for Housegroups, plus suggested prayer topics.

The passages being studied in our Sunday services are listed below. The exact passages and dates may differ between services.

Note that there may be more studies than Housegroup meetings (recognising that Housegroups have various schedules for meeting). Please use the studies which you feel are most appropriate.

Date	Subject
04-May	Mark 6:45-56 <i>"Power on land and sea"</i>
11-May	Mark 7:1-20 <i>"The root of evil"</i>
18-May	Mark 7:24-37 <i>"Faith"</i>
25-May	Mark 8:1-21 <i>"Bread that satisfies"</i>

Contents

Introduction

Study 1 Mark 6:45-56 - **Power on Land and Sea**

Study 2 Mark 7:1-20 - **The Root of Evil**

Study 3 Mark 7:24-37 - **Faith**

Study 4 Mark 8:1-21 - **Bread that satisfies**

Suggested topics for prayer

Many thanks to Dave Burnett for preparing our study notes this month.

Introduction

I'm writing this on the Tuesday after Easter – the first day back to work for many, and the day school term starts here in Reading.

It was thrilling to celebrate Easter again, to remember the great sacrifice that Jesus made for us, and his glorious rising again. I found the whole of the Easter programme to be inspirational, from the Palm Sunday March and open-air preaching, through the Easter Prayer Experience, and the Big Feast, to our services on Good Friday and Easter Day. New to the programme for this year was the presentation of the Messiah on Easter Saturday – a brilliant performance and a great declaration of the gospel through the words of scripture.

On Easter Sunday morning we declared that *Jesus' Resurrection Changes Everything*. This is surely true. It changed the first disciples, transforming them from a frightened and dispirited group into people who turned the world upside down. The resurrection changes us today. Of course it changes our relationship with God, and gives us hope and certainty for the future. But it changes *everything*. It changes our lives. It changes our attitudes. It changes our behaviour. My prayer is that as we return to our "normal" lives again after Easter whatever that includes – home, work, school, university, volunteering in the community – then we will live as those who have met the risen Jesus.

Graeme

"Because I live, you also will live." John 14:19

Study 1 - Mark 6:45-56 Power on Land and Sea

The four studies for this month cover the period from Spring to Autumn probably of the year AD 29. Jesus on three occasions retires with the disciples from Galilee to outlying districts, and so they are often travelling. After the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus urged the disciples to go ahead of him to Bethsaida, which is located on the western shore of Lake Galilee south of Capernaum while he dismissed the crowd. Some hours later after nightfall Jesus sees the disciples straining to row as the wind was against them. He then walked on the water, but the disciples were terrified. In the parallel Matthew account (Matt. 14:24-33) we have the well-known story of Peter walking on the water. After being blown off course they arrive at Gennesaret south of their intended destination of Bethsaida. Here the people recognized him and brought the sick to him. Jesus and his disciples then journeyed around the towns and villages of the area.

1. Why did Jesus urge the disciples to leave? (Look at John 6:14-15).
2. How does this event compare with that of Mark 4:35-41?
3. Since it seems that Jesus was coming to assist his disciples, what do you make of the phrase: "He was about to pass by them"?
4. Have there been times when Jesus has spoken to you, "Don't be afraid"?
5. What can we learn from Jesus when he asks Peter, "Why did you doubt?" (Matt. 14:31).
6. Verse 52 tells us that the hearts of the disciples were hardened. What do you think this means? How could this relate to the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000?

7. The sick wanted to touch him. Remember the account of the woman with the issue of blood. (Mk 5:27-29). What did Jesus commend her for?

Application:

Continue to remember who Jesus is and why He came, so that in times of struggle we may trust and not doubt.

Study 2 - Mark 7:1-20 The Root of Evil

As the fame of Jesus had increased, so had the concerns of the religious leaders of Israel. First the opposition had come from the leaders of the local synagogues. Now some of the Pharisees and Scribes had come from Jerusalem and they were eager to find fault. They found this in the fact that the disciples ate without the ceremonial washing of their hands. Mark, writing as he is to a Gentile readership goes on to explain the traditions of the Jewish leaders (vv.3, 4). To the Jews, the law had two sections: The *written law* contained in the Scriptures, and the *oral law* that experts had worked out over the centuries. To an orthodox Jew all the ritual ceremony was regarded as religion, and of equal importance. Over the centuries the tradition of the elders had come to stifle the heart of the written law, and Jesus sought to expose the hypocrisy of legalism.

1. List some of the traditions that Mark tells us were practiced by the Pharisees. What “traditions” do evangelical Christians often hold? Are these helpful, indifferent, or unhelpful?
2. According to Jesus, what is essential to true worship? (vv.6, 7).
3. Look at how Jesus uses the written scriptures to challenge his critics. (See Isaiah 29:13).
4. *Corban* (v.11) is something offered, dedicated to God and so becomes unavailable for normal use. Discuss how this is used by some of the Pharisees to avoid helping their parents. Look at Exodus 20:12, 21:17.

5. For the orthodox Jew, verse 15 was one of the most radical things Jesus said. Why was this?
6. Why was Jesus so stern in His reply?
7. If God does not want our rituals what is it that God wants of us?
8. What do you think of the list of sins in verses 21 and 22? Are you surprised by what is included, or perhaps what is not included?
9. According to Jesus, what is the source of impurity in our lives?

Application:

Sadly, Christians have often been criticized for their hypocrisy. Reflect on how each of us can be more real in our lifestyle.

Study 3 - Mark 7:24-37 Faith

After his exchange with the religious leaders in Capernaum, Jesus takes his disciples north from Galilee into the region of Tyre. It seems significant that after preaching on the meaning of clean and unclean, Jesus heads into “unclean” Gentile country. There he is approached by a woman who has a demon possessed daughter and begs Jesus to heal her. The dialogue between them shows much about the mission of the Messiah. Jesus with his disciples then left the north-west and travelled south through Galilee to Decapolis in the south-east. During this time Jesus seems to be continually on the move with his disciples. This is at least the second time Jesus had visited the region of Decapolis, and he had already gained a reputation as a healer. Could this have anything to do with Mark 5:20? Mark now recounts the story of how Jesus healed a man who was deaf and dumb.

1. Jesus leaves Galilee and goes into Gentile territory. Try to imagine the response of the religious leaders. Why do you think Jesus went into Gentile territory?
2. What barriers did legalistic Judaism use to exclude this mother?
3. What do you think of Jesus’ response to her request (v.27)?
4. The reply of the woman clearly impressed Jesus as he finally granted her request. What do you think he saw in her?
5. What lessons can we learn from the woman concerning our own prayers?
6. During his travels in Gentile territory what do you think Jesus is trying to teach the disciples?

7. Compare the way Jesus healed the daughter and the deaf-and-dumb man. Do you think Jesus could be miming the present needs of the man?
8. Why do you think Jesus sighed before healing the man (v.34)?
9. How did the people respond to what Jesus had done?
10. Look at Isaiah 35:5-6. What relevance does this have to the ministry of Jesus?

Application:

We all hold prejudices either consciously or not. Bring these to the cross because it is there we are all humbled.

Study 4 - Mark 8:1-21 Bread that satisfies

During the time Jesus is in Decapolis many Gentile people gathered to hear his teaching. It was at this time that Jesus performs a second miraculous feeding of a large crowd. Bread becomes the theme linking this section of the story. After this Jesus and the disciples went in a boat back across the lake to the Jewish area where the Pharisees began asking him for a sign, which he refuses to give. He then journeys across the lake again to the northeast (Bethsaida Julius). It is on this journey that Jesus warns them “Be careful. Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.” The disciples think he is talking about physical bread, but he is actually speaking about the influence of the teaching of the Pharisees.

1. Compare the account of the feeding of the 4,000 with the earlier account of the feeding of the 5,000. List some of the differences.
2. In both feeding miracles the disciples saw obstacles rather than possibilities. What were these obstacles?
3. In Deuteronomy Moses gave a warning that a prophet should not be followed merely because he performs a miracle. (Deut 13:1-5)
What sort of sign do you think they were asking for?
4. Why do you think Jesus sighed and refused?
5. In Jewish thought yeast usually is considered to have an evil influence. What was it in the teaching of the Pharisees that was such a concern to Jesus?
6. In v17, 18 Jesus seems frustrated with the disciples’ lack of understanding. Why do you think this was? What should they have remembered? (It is always easier to be wise in hindsight.)

7. Have there been difficult times during which you forgot the lessons God had shown you in the past?

Application:

The disciples had seen and could recount the facts of the miracles, but they didn't perceive what they pointed to. Take time to reflect on the person and mission of Jesus.

Suggested topics for prayer

Review, prayer and praise

- One third of the year is passed and gone. Take the time to look back and see what God has been doing in your lives, and what he has been doing in his people at Wycliffe. Give thanks and pray

Children, Youth and Families

- Several of our groups are struggling to find sufficient leaders. An example is Girls Brigade, where there is a waiting list of girls, but where leaders are moving on

Church business

- The Elders are working on putting our Church Strategy in writing. Please pray for all of us as a church as we seek to follow the Lord's leading in the future
- Second interviews have been held for the Families Pastor; pray for the right person to be appointed
- Continue to pray for the negotiations concerning the potential purchase of a neighbouring property

People moving here and there

- Pray for Eleanor, Sophie and Nusrat looking at different mission opportunities
- Pray for Nathan completing his course at Regents Park College, and for his role in the ministry at Shinfield Baptist Church
- . . . and for Rachel and Craig getting married this month