

Mark

Session 3

Discipleship

(Mark 8:22-10:52)

**HEARING MARK
A LISTENER'S GUIDE**

By

Elizabeth Struthers Malbon

With additional material from:

**AUGSBURG COMMENTARY ON
THE NEW TESTAMENT
MARK**

By

Donald H. Juel

- ❖ Indicates material is from Malbon
- ◆ Indicates material is from Juel

DISCIPLESHIP

MARK 8:22-10:52

- ❖ Mark can be divided into 2 halves
 - Mark 1-8 Jesus of power
 - Mark 8-16 Jesus who serves by suffering
- ❖ Ancient world tradition of followers having lives that resemble their leader
- ❖ Jesus' suffering is not masochistic
- ❖ Because Jesus serves the powerless, he confronts the power structures of his time and suffers as a result
- ❖ Healers were well-known in ancient world - among the powerful, such as emperors
- ❖ Jesus is not unusual because he heals, but because he is a healer of humble origins

- ❖ Some scholars think this unique status is a partial explanation for the “messianic secret”
- ❖ This section first that was believed to have some semblance of literary structure
- ❖ Oral background of Mark reflected in repetitive use of “and” (kai)
- ❖ Entire section is framed by healings of 2 blind men
- ❖ Central to this section are 3 passion predictions of this form
 - Passion prediction
 - Misunderstanding by disciples
 - Discipleship instruction

First Lesson (Mark 8:22-9:1)

- ❖ When the disciples finally arrive in Bethsaida, it's something that they couldn't do without Jesus' help (6:45)

Healing a Blind Man (Mark 8:22-26)

- ❖ This healing is a 2-step process
- ❖ In an oral presentation of Mark, this story would be connected in the hearers' minds with what they already knew
- ❖ Best connection would be to the 2-stage ministry of Jesus
 - Jewish phase
 - Gentile phase
- ❖ Questions about Jesus' power to heal would cede in the ancient world to a symbolic hearing of blindness

Peter: "You Are the Christ" (Mark 8:27-30)

- ❖ "On the way" is an important phrase that first crops up here, but will be repeated
- ❖ Jesus and disciples are headed for Caesarea Philippi, a major town in Gentile territory
- ❖ Jesus poses the question, "Who do people say that I am?" to the disciples
- ❖ Disciples give various answers
 - John the Baptist
 - Elijah
 - One of the prophets
 - As in the "prophet like Moses" of Deuteronomy 18:18ff
- ❖ Jesus rephrases the question, "But who do you say that I am?"

- Juel notes that this question marks a turning point in the text
- ❖ Peter jumps to the head of the class with “You are the Messiah”

- First use of Christos in Mark

- Peter’s identification makes a claim to kingship for Jesus
- ❖ So, Peter understands the title of Mark
- ❖ But does Peter see clearly?

- ❖ Jesus sternly orders the disciples not to tell

- Verse 30 is difficult to translate
 - Actual verb is same as the one translated as “rebuked” elsewhere
 - Usually, this verb implies a pejorative sense
 - Using rebuked here might imply disapproval of Peter’s confession

First Passion Prediction (Mark 8:31-32a)

- ❖ What does it mean to be the Messiah, or Christ?
- ❖ It means that Jesus will suffer, be rejected, be killed, and rise on the third day
- Juel notes the use of *dei* here, meaning “it is necessary” and suggesting that Jesus is constrained by God’s will
- Psalms were the interpretive aid that early Christians used to understand
 - Jesus’ rejection derived from Psalm 118:22
- Notes careful distinctions that Mark makes between the various Jewish factions
- From here on, there are few oppositional interactions with the Pharisees

- Each passion prediction includes also the prediction that Jesus will rise in three days
- “The resurrection of Jesus is every bit as expected as his death. That observation will be important for interpreting the conclusion of the Gospel.” (Juel)

Misunderstanding (Mark 8:32b-33)

- ❖ Privately, Peter rebukes Jesus
- ❖ In turn, Jesus rebukes Peter, calling him Satan (means adversary, not necessarily a person here)
- ❖ Peter appears to have some vision problems
- ❖ Peter is focused on Jesus' power in healing and teaching
- Jewish tradition did not prepare the disciples for a rejected, suffering Messiah
- "There is a difference between 'the things of God' and 'human things'...That is why Jesus' ministry as the divine means of establishing the kingdom has stirred such controversy. There must be a clash. The scandal of the cross is not due to slightly flawed

scriptural interpretation but to the very nature of things....Someone must die, even if death will not have the final word."

- Juel believes Jesus' death results not so much because God himself is constrained, but because rescuing fallen humanity requires a battle in which Jesus will die

Discipleship Instruction (Mark 8:34-9:1)

- ❖ Now Jesus begins to teach the crowd about the suffering Messiah
- ❖ "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."
- ❖ Rome reserved crucifixion for those who challenged their authority and power
- ❖ So, when Jesus says that crucifixion is part of the future for those who follow him, he is saying that his disciples must directly confront the powerful in society
- ❖ Lumped together with this central teaching are additional sayings of Jesus
 - The Son of Man will return in glory and distinctions will be made on the basis of shame or lack of shame about Jesus

- Some would see the coming of the kingdom of God with power
- “Discipleship is lived in view of the cross but also in view of the coming glory.” (Juel)

Reviewing Mark 8:31-9:1 - First Passion Prediction Unit

- ❖ Composed of 3 parts
 - Passion prediction by Jesus
 - Misunderstanding by disciples
 - Jesus' instruction about discipleship

Second Lesson (Mark 9:2-50)

God: "This Is My Son" (Mark 9:2-13)

- ❖ "Six days later" is reminiscent of Moses going up a mountain to speak with God (Exodus 24:15-18)
 - Moses goes up Mt. Sinai
 - Cloud covers mountain for 6 days
 - God speaks to Moses on seventh day

- ❖ Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up the mountain with him

- ❖ Jesus is transfigured
 - Juel notes that the verb translated as transfigured is rare and links this use to Paul's use in 2 Corinthians 3:18

- ❖ Elijah and Moses appear on the mountain talking with Jesus
 - Both Elijah and Moses met with God on Mount Sinai

- ❖ Peter, attempting to add something, says, "Let us make three dwellings"
 - Like those used in the Festival of Booths (Leviticus 23:39-43)
 - Juel links this to the anticipated celebration in the end times as described in Zechariah 14:16-21

- ❖ Voice from cloud says, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him."
 - Unidentified voice is that of God
 - Reminds us of the voice at Jesus' baptism
 - This voice is intended to be heard by Peter, James and John, and the audience
 - Notes relation to Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14

- ❖ Elijah and Moses are no longer present

- ❖ What will Jesus say next?

- ❖ Jesus orders the disciples to tell no one what they've seen until he has risen from the dead
- ❖ This is the signal that the messianic secret has an end
- ❖ Disciples begin discussion on meaning of rising from the dead
- ❖ This is distinctive from the resurrection at the end of time with which they are familiar
- ❖ So disciples decide to ask a related question: "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"
 - Elijah was carried to heaven in a chariot without dying first
 - Note that the interpretation of the scribes is valid, even if it is extended
- ❖ Jesus responds, "Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him."

- ❖ Reminds us that John was in the wilderness dressed like Elijah and eating foods like Elijah
- Reminds us that what is surprising here is not that Elijah should come first, but that he has already come and has been killed

Exorcism and Prayer (Mark 9:14-29)

- ❖ At the bottom of the mountain, are a crowd, the other 9 disciples, and a man and his son with an unclean spirit
- ❖ The disciples have made an unsuccessful attempt to heal the son
- Contrasts the failure of the disciples here with their early success when they were first sent out
- ❖ A discouraged Jesus who knows what he is facing in Jerusalem says, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you?"
- ❖ Even as Jesus' suffering is beginning, he says to the father, "How long has this been happening to him?"
 - The father answers, "From childhood...but if you able to do

- anything, have pity on us and help us."
- Jesus answers, "If you are able! - All things can be done for the one who believes."
 - Then the father is able to muster some faith, "I believe, help my unbelief!"
- ❖ Jesus casts out the unclean spirit and the boy resembles a corpse
- Shades of Jairus and his daughter
 - Foreshadowing of the Son of God
- ❖ Later, the disciples want to know why they couldn't heal the boy
- Jesus' answer: "This kind can only come out through prayer."
 - Prepares the disciples for a time when Jesus is no longer present in the same way
 - Mark's audience also has access to prayer as a resource
 - "The most potent weapon against the forces of darkness is prayer." (Juel)

Second Passion Prediction (Mark 9:30-31)

- ❖ On the way south through Galilee Jesus makes his next passion prediction
- ❖ "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again."

Misunderstanding (Mark 9:32-34)

- ❖ According to the narrator, the disciples misunderstand, but are afraid to ask Jesus
- ❖ "Their failure to understand is only partial: they understood enough to be afraid to ask to understand more."
- ❖ On their arrival in Capernaum, Jesus asks the disciples what they had been discussing
- ❖ The disciples don't answer as they had been arguing about who was the greatest, preparing us for Jesus' instruction

Discipleship Instruction (Mark 9:35-37)

- ❖ At this point, Jesus sits down, and calls the disciples for more instruction
- ❖ He says, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."
- Juel notes that the word for servant is diakonos or one who waits on tables and suggests that the disciples don't think of themselves as waiters
- ❖ Then to illustrate, he takes a child and says, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."
- ❖ In the ancient world, children were not symbols of innocence, but powerlessness
- ❖ Even slaves had more power than children

More Misunderstanding (Mark 9:38)

- ❖ John speaks up and says, "We saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us."

More Discipleship Instruction (Mark 9:39-49)

- ❖ But Jesus replies, "Do not stop him...Whoever is not against us is for us."

- ❖ Mark includes several sayings about stumbling
 - Those causing a little one to stumble should have a millstone tied to their neck and be thrown into the sea
 - Cut off your hand if it causes you to stumble
 - This is hyperbole used by storytellers to get the audience to pay attention
 - Note the contrast with Jesus' healing to preserve wholeness and the import of what is worth so much that one would sacrifice that wholeness

- ❖ Sayings using the image of salt
 - "Everyone will be salted with fire."

- “If salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?”
- These sayings deal with preservation for the kingdom of God

Reviewing Mark 9:30-50 - Second Passion Prediction Unit

- ❖ Characterized by extra misunderstanding
- ❖ Remember, this is Mark's technique for telling his audience, and us, the good news about Jesus

Third Lesson (Mark 10:1-52)

Teaching about Divorce (Mark 10:1-12)

- ❖ Jesus and the disciples are headed south beyond the Jordan
- ❖ Even here, crowds gather and the Pharisees pose a question to Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"
- ❖ Jesus throws the question back to them, saying in essence, "You know the law. What does it say?"
- ❖ The Pharisees summarize the teaching on divorce
 - Found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4
 - ❖ Jesus adds that this is the law because of "your hardness of heart", but that from the time of creation it was God's intent that "what God has joined together, let no one separate"

- ♦ Jesus is using the Jewish interpretive tradition that scripture interprets scripture, but he uses this tradition in such a way that it is radical and dangerous
- ❖ Later, with his disciples, Jesus clarifies the teaching by saying, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."
- ❖ In the Jewish world, only men were able to acquire divorces and adultery is only an offense against a husband
- ❖ So why does Jesus turn things upside down?
- ❖ To protect the woman, who would have no home after divorce

Teaching about Children (Mark 10:13-16)

- ❖ The disciples try to “protect” Jesus by keeping people from bringing their children to Jesus for a blessing
- ❖ “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”
- ❖ Children are those with no power in this society

Teaching about Wealth (Mark 10:17-31)

- ❖ A rich man asks Jesus how he might acquire eternal life
- ❖ Jesus says start with the 10 commandments
- ❖ The rich man claims to have followed them since he was young
- ❖ So, Jesus says, there's just one thing left to do, sell everything you own and give it to the poor, then follow me
- ❖ Our narrator says, "he was shocked and went away grieving"
- ❖ The disciples are shocked too because wealth is a blessing bestowed by God
- ❖ Jesus says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

- ❖ The disciples are still shocked, “Then who can be saved?”
- ❖ Jesus responds that it is God who makes salvation possible
- ❖ Peter reminds Jesus that the disciples have left everything to follow Jesus
- ❖ To this Jesus says that they will receive their reward for this. And he adds, “Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”
 - The rewards listed, houses, brothers, sisters, fields, suggest that Christians will continue to have mundane tasks and concerns
- ❖ There will be more reversals and dashed expectations ahead

Reviewing Mark 10:1-31 - Challenging the Status Quo

- ❖ Jesus' teaching establishes new values
 - Men are not more valuable than women
 - Adults are not more valuable than children
 - The rich are not more valuable than the poor
- ❖ The standard image of the household is reversed

Third Passion Prediction (Mark 10:32-34)

- ❖ Jesus and his frightened disciples are “on the way going up to Jerusalem”
- ❖ The full implications of Jesus’ challenge to the status quo are beginning to dawn on the disciples - and so they are afraid
- ❖ Third passion prediction is quite explicit and detailed
- ❖ “The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.”

Misunderstanding and Discipleship Instruction (Mark 10:35-40)

- ❖ James and John come to Jesus with a special request
- ❖ They ask, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory"
- ❖ Jesus questions whether they are willing to endure the same suffering that he is to undergo
- ❖ The assessment is that they will go through this suffering, "but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."
- The images of cup and baptism come from Christian ritual

- Baptism specifically seen as participation in Christ's death (Romans 6:1-5)
- Notes also the use of the passive voice to avoid speaking of God
- ❖ For ambiguous reasons, the remaining disciples become angry at these two
- ❖ In contrast to the Gentiles, "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."
- ❖ Jesus sets up a new power structure among his followers

Reviewing Mark 10:32-45 - Third Passion Prediction Unit

- ❖ Last passion prediction unit in Mark

Healing a Blind Man (Mark 10:46-52)

- ❖ Echoing the first story of healing a blind man, this narrative begins, "And they came to Jericho"
 - Compare to "And they came to Bethsaida"
- ❖ The people order the blind man to be quiet; they try to prevent his access to Jesus
 - Compare to the people who bring the first blind man to Jesus
- ❖ "But he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"
- The blind man sees what others do not
- ❖ The blind man is called to Jesus, where he says, "My teacher, let me see again."
- ❖ Followed immediately by, "Go; your faith has made you well."

- ❖ The man is healed and “followed him on the way”
- ❖ Repetition of this phrase, “on the way”, in 8:27 and here at 10:52 is another indicator that these 2 stories should be seen as a frame for the passion prediction material in the center
- ❖ In an oral culture, key phrases would likely be accented or said with a special voice
- ❖ The last unit of Mark begins “When they were approaching Jerusalem” telling us the final destination of “the way”
- ❖ “On the way” is Mark’s way of speaking about discipleship, a discipleship that seeks to serve even if that means suffering

Reviewing Mark 8:22-10:52 - Discipleship

❖ Structure of this part of Mark

- 8:22-26 Healing blindness (2 stages)
- 8:27-30 Who is Jesus? Christ!
- 8:31-9:1 First passion prediction unit
- 9:2-13 Who is Jesus? Son of God!
- 9:14-29 Exorcism
- 9:30-50 2nd passion prediction unit
- 10:1-31 Teaching
- 10:32-45 3rd passion prediction unit
- 10:46-52 Healing blindness (on the way)

❖ Malbon's questions to ponder

- "What are Jesus' followers to understand, and to do, about the discipleship that following Jesus demands?"
- "If the lives of disciples are to reflect the pattern of their teacher's life, what does that mean for the followers of Jesus?"

- “How is God’s being on the side of the powerless good news to the powerful?”
- “Is it good news to people who have power, and, if so, what is our discipleship call?”
- “If the people who have no power are not to replicate the ways of the powerful, what should the people who already have power be doing to be on the same side as God, to be thinking the things of God and not thinking human things (8:33)?”