



DAILY  
READINGS  
JUNE 10 - 14

MARK

## Day 1 – Something Out of the Ordinary

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Mark 3:7-12

When people heard that there was a man exhibiting uncommon power to heal not only the most debilitating, crippling, long-lasting illnesses and diseases, but also to eliminate the most heinous spiritual afflictions and possessions, it would be an understatement to say they flocked to see him. They came from everywhere – from across the entire land of Israel and beyond – in order to be healed and restored. So great were their numbers that Mark records the very real fear that Jesus might be (unintentionally) crushed by the sheer weight of people who have sought him out for healing. And that was the attraction for them: he could heal. In a time and place where medical knowledge was incredibly rudimentary, and malignant spiritual realities were greatly feared, and where people's ability to deal with either effectively was limited, someone who could powerfully deal with both would be eagerly sought out and accosted.

But there is more than just feel-good healing and restoration going on here. Jesus is not just patching up wounds and holes, whether in people or reality, as freeing and transforming as that is for people. At a deeper level of engagement, he is challenging the very powers and forces that undermine God's rule and authority, and announcing that the end of their domination and distortion of human beings made in God's image starts now. These forces and spirits know that they are encountering someone of far greater power and presence than themselves, someone with power of an order of magnitude far greater than theirs. They cannot help but declare his name, acknowledging who it is that is dethroning them.

#### Question to Consider

What do you think was going through the minds of those in the crowd?

#### Prayer

Lord God, thank you for your healing power that runs deeper than just our hurts and illnesses, but that attends to the cracks in all of reality. Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 2 – Solitude with God

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Mark 6:45-46

In the passage prior to this one (to be looked at in a few weeks' time), Jesus has just performed what many have described as one of his most famous miracles: feeding over five thousand people with a handful of loaves and a few fish. In this next passage, another “top ten” miracle, as it were, is performed by Jesus: walking on the water. But notice what is sandwiched in between these two episodes. In verses 45-46 we read that Jesus dismisses the disciples and the crowd and, alone, proceeds up the mountainside to pray. We may be tempted to think, “Of course, feeding over five thousand people, dealing with huge crowds – this can be very tiring, so naturally he needs some down time to recuperate, especially if he’s going to end up performing more big miracles the next day.”

Without denying Jesus’ genuine human need for times of rest and restoration, I’d like to think it’s the other way around. It is only because Jesus regularly takes the time to seek the presence and guidance of his heavenly Father in solitude, away from the crowds, that he is able to faithfully and powerfully take on the role of healer, teacher, miracle worker, master, friend. Because he takes the time to dwell in his Father’s presence, his Father can work mightily through his words and his deeds. Even the son of God – especially the son of God – made sure that he spent time in the loving, empowering, energising, restful, presence of his Father in order to maintain the connection between them, and to seek guidance and strength from the one whose will he was enacting in his every word and deed.

#### Question to Consider

How often do you seek restful solitude in the presence of God?

#### Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your presence and for both the rest and guidance that you long to give us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 3 – Lord of the World

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Mark 6:47-56

Human beings like to categorise things. This can be especially difficult when what we are trying to categorise doesn't seem to fit into our neat little categories, although in the case of Jesus perhaps the difficulty is that he seems to fit into too many categories, and contradictory ones at that. So we say that when he displays things like hunger and sadness and tiredness, that's a sign of his humanity. And when he performs miracles, like healings and feedings and walking on water for example, that's a sign of divinity. We have a human box and a divine box. Dividing Jesus and his actions up seems to be the only way to get a handle on who he is.

But this is to miss, as the disciples have missed, who Jesus really is and what he was really doing. He is not just a miracle-working prophet, or a wise teacher, or an exemplar of what it means to be truly human the way God always wanted us to be – though these are all important facets of who Jesus is. He is the Messiah. He is Israel's Lord and he is intended to be the world's Lord too, ruler of all creation, commander of the wind and waves, seeds and plants, loaves and fishes, the true human where all other humans have missed the mark. He shows us what God's true sovereignty of all things looks like, as well as revealing the authority that was always meant to reside in, and be exercised by, true humanity. The two go together, and point to deeper truths than the disciples could not see at that moment – but that they would one day see and understand.

#### Question to Consider

What is your understanding of the relationship between Jesus' divinity and humanity?

#### Prayer

Loving Lord, there is always so much more of you to discover, so much more to experience and know; thank you for the depths of your being that you share with us and the depths of love we have yet to encounter. Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 4 – Water, Water Everywhere

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Mark 4:35-40

For a “desert people”, there is plenty of water imagery in the story of the Israelites, in their history and in their scriptures. Much of this imagery hovers in the background of this episode on the sea of Galilee. There is of course God’s control and separation of the waters at the point of creation; the escape through the parted waters of the Red Sea; the deep oceans as home to the chaotic elemental forces represented by Leviathan; and even the fateful sea journey of the reluctant prophet Jonah.

God’s power is being unleashed; his kingdom is near. God is sovereign over all of nature and is now moving to bring his rebellious creation back into a restored relationship with him. The rebellious forces of evil that are prevalent in the world, defying God, leading people astray, seeking to destroy God’s good creation are on notice that they will not wreak havoc for much longer. The one destined to destroy them and to undo the effects of their existence is now here – and so confident is Jesus in his mastery over these forces that in the midst of a powerful storm he can sleep peacefully at the bottom of a rocking, swaying boat. The same power that created the universe is on hand to restore it. Creation will be restored; the people will be led out of slavery to freedom; the chaos of life will be stilled; and Jesus is no reluctant Jonah being thrown overboard, but the very one called to still the storm and restore things to the way they should be.

#### Questions to Consider

Why do you think the disciples reacted the way they did? What do you think of Jesus’ rebuke of them?

#### Prayer

Almighty God, you are Lord of all things, great and small, near and far, quiescent and rebellious. Help me see the ways in which you enact your will in this world, and may I not be fearful of the way in which you do so, but seek to join with you in all I do. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## Day 5 – Who Is This Man?

### Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

#### Scripture Reading – Mark 4:41

The disciples lived with Jesus, travelled with him, worked with him, were taught by him; apart from his family, they spent more time with him than any other people. Yet despite all this time spent with him, on numerous occasions they underestimated him. The gospel writers are not shy in showing us the many times when the disciples misunderstood what Jesus was saying, incorrectly interpreted his teaching, or simply couldn't at all comprehend what he was trying to show them. In this current instance, Mark describes the disciples as filled with awe, terrified, afraid. The question they ask themselves is a pertinent one, for them as long time followers, and for us, regardless of the length of our journey so far: who is this man? There will be times when we will ask ourselves this question. It often comes up for us when God does something in our lives that completely upends our previous conception of who he is, something that at first seems to shatter our picture of him, only to then expand our horizons and reveal a larger, deeper, fuller picture of who God is and what he is capable of. It also occurs when something deep, dark and difficult happens in life, when something bad or traumatic confronts us, the force of which compels us to look to Jesus again, in the midst of pain and uncertainty, and ask: who is this man? Is he who I thought he was? Does he have the power to help and heal me? Like the disciples here, our picture is exploded, expanded; like the disciples, we ask if the person we thought we knew can still help us in the space we now find ourselves.

#### Questions to Consider

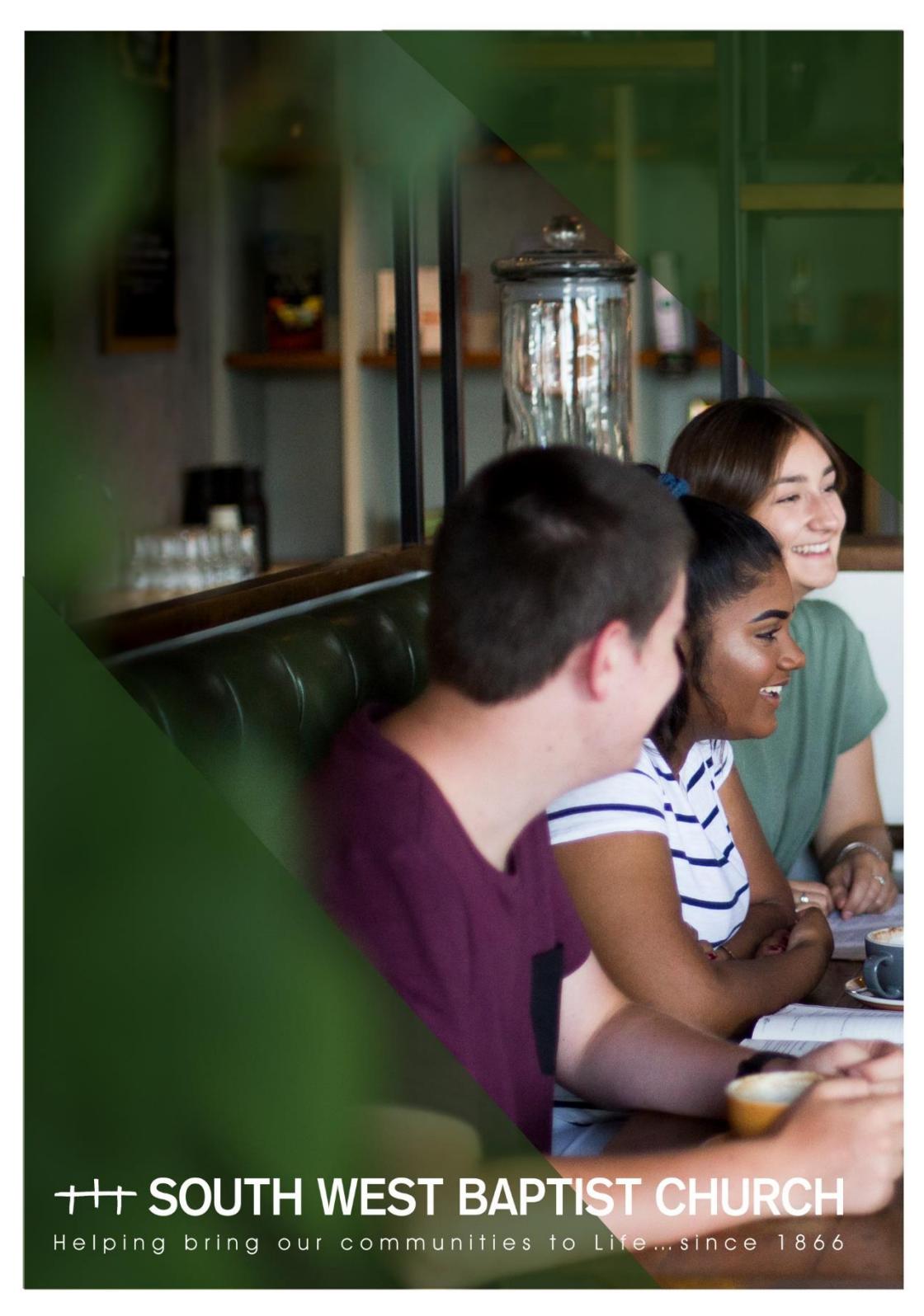
Have there been times when you underestimated Jesus? Why? How was your picture of, and relationship with, God expanded?

#### Prayer

Gracious Lord, thank you for your patience and understanding with me in the times when I am slow or reluctant to understand the true reach of your love for me and for this world. Take me deeper into you. Amen.

### Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

## **Saturday/Sunday Notes**



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