

*These reflections are produced by parishioners of St. Brice's Anglican Church, North Bay, to go along with reading the Gospel according to St. Mark during the season of Lent. We want to encourage people to read through Mark as part of their Lenten devotions this year. Thank you so much to everyone who contributed. -PA*

### 2019 Lenten Meditations

Mark 1: 1-11; March 6

Mar 1:3 Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mar 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Lent, is a time of repentance, cleansing and sanctification. As water cleanses outwardly, so the Holy Spirit cleanses inwardly, convicting us of sin and leading us into all righteousness. In preparation for our Lord's second coming, He sanctifies us that we, "the church," might be presented to our Lord Jesus Christ "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that [we] might be holy and without blemish." (Eph 5:27)

Mark 1: 12-20, March 7

Is there a temptation in your life that your struggling with that you have not turned over to God? If so, what is stopping you?

As Jesus disciples immediately left what they were doing to follow Him, are there people, places or things in your life that are distracting you from a deeper and more intimate relationship with Him?

Mark 1:21-34, March 8

As I read the passage, I wonder how it was that the evil one was the man that recognized Jesus and who Jesus truly was. Even after he call the evil out of the man, the people around Jesus seeing this don't realize who He is. Am I/you able to see Jesus around me and what amazing work he is doing around and in me/you?

Jesus would not let the other demons speak, we need not to let the demons speak but to case them out in the name of "Jesus Christ". And then as the mother-in-law did serve the Lord to the best of our gifts and abilities.

Mark 1: 35-45, March 9

Among all the distractions of the world, we all need time sometimes to rekindle our relationship with the Lord. The time that Jesus chose here was very early in the morning, before people began to see him with their needs and demands. What time do you choose (and use self-discipline to keep regularly)?

Mark 2: 1-17, March 10

Don't love only the strongest, most beautiful or most perfect ... instead remember the example given in Mark 2: 1-17 about the four friends who loved the paralytic so much they chopped a hole through the roof to lower him down so he, too, could see and hear Jesus speak.

### Mark 2: 18-28, March 11

Jesus' reply to those who question why His disciples do not fast is more than a defense of their choosing the right response. Using imagery of a wedding, Jesus shares that it would be incredulous for the Bridegroom's attendants to fast while "He is with them." He states decidedly that they "cannot fast" while they have the Bridegroom. Similarly, no one would pour new wine into old wine skins and ruin the bottles. One can recall Jesus' first miracle in Cana at a wedding -- changing the water to wine. Jesus makes all things new. We are new creations in Him, utterly transformed, not patched up like a garment. Jesus wants us to rejoice in Him as Our Redeemer, Lord of the Sabbath, and Lover of our souls.

### Mark 3: 1-19, March 12

As Jesus sees the man with the withered hand, He already knows He will heal Him but He also wants to bring healing to the "onlookers and spies." He also wants to bring a new perspective to the act of healing. He challenges all those present and those who would read of this account afterwards (namely you and me). The Sabbath day was a day of rest but healing was not work to Jesus so He healed "because He is the Lord of the Sabbath."

### Mark 3: 20-35, March 13

Jesus had been publicly teaching and healing the sick and afflicted and, as more people heard of Him, crowds of followers grew and it became difficult, sometimes, to move. He had recently selected and ordained his twelve apostles; crowds were becoming multitudes, and also, some of what He said and did, such as healing on the sabbath, drew the attention and criticism of temple elders. Scribes who had come from Jerusalem, declared He was possessed by "Beelzebub" (the devil) and that was how He was able cast out devils. Hearing this, Jesus answered, putting forth his logical argument into parables, asking "How can Satan cast out Satan?" and "if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." and "if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." and "if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end." Perhaps he was being more personal when he said "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." Was he saying they were trying to destroy his reputation by attacking his credibility, saying he was possessed by the devil? Finally, as a warning of how serious their attack on His character was, He said people can be forgiven their sins and the evil things they say, but whoever blasphemed against the Holy Ghost would never be forgiven and indeed was in danger of eternal damnation. These teachings also caught the attention of Matthew (12: 24-32) and Luke (4: 17-23).

Looking at the state of the world today, with all the tribal, sect and religious wars, the petty squabbles and feuds that break up countries and families, it seems we will never learn the teachings contained in these parables.

### Mark 4: 1-20, March 14

In this parable Jesus is speaking of himself as the sower and the seed as the word. The seed is in the hearts of the people for whom the word of God is given. When people receive the word, they deal very differently with it. It is not our

job to judge or discern who is ready to hear the word. It is up to us as followers of Christ to spread the word.

Mark 4: 21-41, March 15

Those that give, receive more. Those that do not, will lose what they have. Jesus tells stories to teach about growth and faith.

Mark 5: 1 -20, March 16

At first, I found this a difficult reading but after many readings and prayer, I now see the man filled with evil begged Jesus to save him and he did.

I'm still uncomfortable with the demons being put into the pigs, who then drowned killing the demons and I see in verse 15 I'm not alone.

I also note that Jesus used this as a way of letting people know how great he is and that his greatness would be spread all over the land.

Mark 5: 21-43, March 17

My take on these verses was that the first lady had true faith in that if she could just touch Jesus she would be healed. However, in the second instance the parents needed to be convinced of the power of Jesus that he in fact would be able to heal their daughter.

Mark 6: 1-13, March 18

Let us take a moment to quiet our minds.

In life, yes, and even in our church life, we experience challenges to overcome. Let us think of that as a good thing. As we all realize, it is easy to become complacent in life in general, as well as our church life. Mark suggests that it might appear that life would hold no challenge to a man with Jesus' powers. Mark goes on to tell us about the many conflicts and tensions which placed great demands on the character of the Lord.

Let us realize how fortunate we are that, when our life and church problems arise, we are able to read God's word for guidance, go to him with our prayers for comfort, and know too, that our Church family will add their support as well as their love and kindness. We are truly blessed. Amen.

Mark 6:14-29, March 19

Herod heard about Jesus and his teaching and he was filled with guilt, because he thought this person was John the Baptist who had been raised from the dead, and he remembered that he caused John to be killed. He recalls that he had John arrested and imprisoned under pressure from his wife and advisors. Herod married his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. Herodias holds a grudge against John and wants him killed because John has told Herod that it is not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. In spite of John's rebuke Herod still was in awe of John. Herodias was a bitter woman and wanted John killed so that there was no one to remind her of her moral law. Herod acted on impulse. He makes an oath and then will not take it back because he does not want to look weak, and feared what men might say.

We need to think before we speak and think about the consequences of our actions. We need to be like John, a man of courage that stands up for what is right. We cannot hide our sins from God like Herodias tried to do by having John killed.

### Mark 6: 30-44, March 20

These passages tell of the miracle that Jesus did, to make 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish feed thousands of people. It also shows how Jesus wanted to help feed the people when his disciples didn't think they would be able to help them.

There are times in our life where we feel we might not be able to help others, but anything we can do to try and help will benefit others. Also, we should not look at our limitations but we should look at what we have around use, because every little bit helps.

### Mark 6: 45-56, March 21

The Lord is so good, and works miracles in our lives every day – but he is humble and gives freely, even when we don't deserve it.

### Mark 7: 1-13, March 22

People sometimes follow rules & traditional habits over God's word.

We don't harm our bodies of what we put in it, rather than what we allow to come out of it. It is not what we put in the body that wrongs the body. It's the SIN in use that we allow out of our bodies that harms us (bad thoughts, greed, lying, etc.). These are the things that defile the body, not unclean hands.

I think we spend so much time focusing on what were doing on the outside (a certain image we obtain) & we pay very little attention to what's happening on the inside that nobody sees but God & that's where are sin comes from grows (what's in our hearts & minds).

### Mark 7: 14-23, March 23

In Mark 7:14-23 Jesus teaches us that it's what's in our heart that is important to God, not outward appearances, or how well we follow man-made rules. In the verses leading up to this text, the "Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law" criticize the disciples for not washing their hands before a meal, which was a requirement in the Jewish tradition. To the Pharisees, following the rules legislated by the religious leaders became more important than following the commandments of God. Jesus tells the crowd gathered around him that it is not what enters a person that defiles him, "Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean'." (vs. 15). When his disciples ask Jesus about the meaning of this parable, he answers them, "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts ..." (vs. 21). With this teaching in mind, it is well to remember the prayer in Psalm 51:

"Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me". Psalm 51:10 (NIV)

(References: The Expository Files, What Man-made Rules Cannot Do, Warren E. Berkley, December 2001. Answers From The Book, Can you explain Mark 7:14-23? Posted Sep 26, 2015.)

### Mark 7:24-37, March 24

This passage contains two of Jesus' healing miracles – casting out an evil spirit from a Syrophenician woman's daughter and restoring a man's deafness and speech. The circumstances are different in each case but they do share at least one important thing about the character of Jesus.

The woman and her daughter are Gentiles – people often referred to as dogs, unclean and unfit to be associated with. The deaf man no doubt felt helpless, especially when others shouted at him and he could not respond.

So, it is Jesus' 'bedside manner' that is just as important as the healings themselves. Rather than reject the mother's plea outright, he listens carefully to her after he has told her that his first duty is to his own people (the children) and is moved by her heartfelt reply that even the dogs get to eat the crumbs. She stands for the Gentile world which eagerly seized on the bread of heaven which the Jews had rejected and thrown away. His healing of the deaf man is also done with consideration and compassion. Jesus takes him away from the crowd to ease his anxiety and embarrassment.

When Jesus heals, he heals more than our physical ailments, he also heals our souls. This passage also reminds us all to treat each other as Jesus would treat us.

Mark 8:1-13, March 25

This passage from the Gospel of Saint Mark signifies, to me, an important message about the miracles and signs that come to us from Heaven. I think that we should aspire to be like the humble four thousand who thankfully gather and are fed through the miracles and mysteries of Christ our Lord. Instead of being distracted by the constant requests for a sign from God, we only need to have faith and observe our life around us to see that He has provided us with an abundance of miracles out of his ceaseless compassion for us.

Mark 8, 14-26, March 26

I hear God saying: Believe and trust in me. I will always provide for you. Healing hands for all my children.

Mark 8:27- 9:1, March 27

It is asking for a confession of faith when Jesus confides his fate to his disciples.

He wants to know who they think he is.

Jesus is rebuked by Peter after his confession, for I think Peter was hoping that he'd be a Messiah with an iron fist to overthrow the Roman Empire.

Jesus tells them to follow him they too would have to pick up and carry their own cross, for true discipleship is to imitate The Son of Man.

"According to Jesus, both "Messiah" and "disciple" are characterized by suffering and self-denial for the sake of others." -Elizabeth Shively

Jesus does not call himself The Christ but the Son of Man. This is the only time in Mark that he makes that self- identification.

Mark 9: 2-13, March 28

Jesus was preparing Peter, James and John for his death and resurrection. There Jesus' true glory was revealed.

Mark 9: 14-32, March 29

Jesus was asked if he could do anything to help heal a father's boy, who had an evil spirit that threw him to the ground and robbed him of his speech. Jesus returned the father's question with a question... "If you can?" or what it seems to mean, since Jesus is saying it "If I can?" Of course Jesus can!

Then Jesus continues with “Everything is possible for one who believes.” Jesus ‘can’ because he knows the Father intimately and believes his all-powerfulness and his compassion for everyone.

The boy’s father *says* he believes, but has some unbelief. Sound familiar? Like us, I think the more we cuddle in close to our loving and heavenly Father and spend plenty of intimate moments or hours with Him the more our belief will be fortified. When we really know Him and let Him really know us as we share everything with Him like Jesus does, then our unbelief will be transformed into full blown, total belief. Watch out, everything *will* be, possible. Bring it on. I believe.

As an additional note, there seemed to be an urgency for Jesus to heal the boy before the crowd descended on them, so the father did not even get a chance to try out his belief. I am sure he did lots of times after.

March 9: 33-50, March 30

This varied section of Mark’s Gospel shows us Jesus at his most challenging, in several ways. Jesus challenges worldly ideas of status, as well as the human ego, by insisting that “if anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (v. 35). This, of course, is in light of his revelation to the disciples that he is about to die, something they do not understand (vs. 31-32). Jesus emphasizes this by taking a small child as his example of one who is worthy to be received in his name (vs. 36-37). Jesus also challenges the disciples’ tendency, and ours, to divide the world into “us” and “them”: “he who is not against us is on our side” (v. 40). To belong to Christ is to step away from all these accustomed ways of regarding our place in the world.

Particularly weighty are Jesus’ words in vs. 42-48, words that have the power to convict many a conscience. Jesus’ love for his “little ones” (not only children, but all those the world regards as lowly) brings serious responsibility for those who hold them in their care. This continues to a general consideration of sinful deeds. We might easily see Jesus’ colorful warnings, about cutting off body parts that make us sin, as urging us to put away from ourselves habits and practices that draw us away from the love of neighbour that Jesus embodies. There is certainly truth in such a view.

But we might wonder why Jesus uses images of self-maimed bodies when he is also known as one who healed bodies to restore people to a full human life and to manifest his power. Consider that among all of Jesus’ healing stories, he is never reported to have restored a limb or a body part that had been cut off and lost. He raised Lazarus from the dead, yet he could not or would not do this? There must be more to it.

Jesus says that even those with missing body parts (literally or figuratively), those who have sacrificed part of their own selves, can enter the kingdom of heaven. That suggests that there is a certain kind of injury to the self, what seems a disfiguring or disabling injury in the world’s eyes, that must be borne, will not be restored in this life, and is no barrier to union with Christ.

Remembering also that Scripture always addresses us collectively, we might ask what these verses mean for the church, the body of Christ. What does it mean for the church to cut off a limb that makes it sin? St Paul, who wrote forcefully that circumcision, another kind of cutting-off which is a marker of Jewish identity, brings no special status with Christ (Galatians 2.11-5.6), can help us here. In dealing with trouble in the Corinthian church, Paul advised that serious offenders be cut off from the community (1 Corinthians 5.1-5, 11-13), but also that they later be restored (2 Corinthians 2.5-8).

Apparent injuries to the body of Christ may be unavoidable at times to prevent the effects of sin, but the body of Christ can be healed.

Mark 10:1-16, March 31

The passage deals with two major issues: Marriage and children.

Firstly that under God's law, marriage, which as stated, between a man and woman, is a unifying bond for life.

Secondly, that God both loves and welcomes those that are vulnerable and marginalized as demonstrated by Jesus' accepting the children brought to Him to be blessed.

Mark 10: 17-34, April 1

This passage is full of challenges. We shouldn't assume it is easy to get to heaven -- Jesus himself paid with his own life. People who think they are first will be last, and vice-versa. This particular rich man had to give up all his possessions, and he couldn't do it. It's surprising that even when meeting Jesus face to face, the young man couldn't make the necessary sacrifice to be a follower. Are we prepared to give up everything God wants us to?

Mark 10: 35-52, April 2

James and John desired to sit on either side of Jesus in Heaven.

Jesus rebuked them and told them, they too must also suffer pain and suffering; and it would be the only one to deserve it. It would be special honour from God in Heaven.

Jesus said *He* was his father's servant and we like him, must be servants to *all* and share God's love with thankfulness and joy.

Mark 11: 1-11, April 3

Jesus is getting 12 disciples together.

The disciples are helping Jesus get ready for his journey.

Jesus starts his journey to Bethany.

Mark 11: 12-25 (26), April 4

When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem with his disciples, he curses a fig tree which is out of season, for not bearing fruit. When Jesus arrives at the temple and sees it being used as a marketplace, he overturns the tables of the sellers, declaring that the temple was a place of prayer and not a den of thieves. When he and his disciples leave Jerusalem, they notice that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed had withered from its roots. In conclusion, Jesus says to his disciples to have faith in God and to pray with that faith that what they ask for will be done for them.

Fig trees produce fruit 1 or 2 times per year.

In Mark 11:12-22 the Bible tells us of Jesus cursing a fig tree and of Jesus clearing the temple courts tables of all that was being sold to those who were in need of a sacrifice to comply with the law and that belief in God will move mountains.

I believe the thread woven in this passage is that of revealing what is on one's heart by the words and actions he/she says/takes. He may have been cursing the fig tree not only to demonstrate the power of our words, but also the power of our words when we are not 'in season' (struggling, suffering). By clearing the temple tables Jesus shows us that examination of what we've allowed to happen in our heart (temple) that is unhealthy

must be cleared (through the forgiveness of God and our own forgiveness towards those that have hurt us) The fig tree that is cursed withers and dies revealing God's power through Jesus' words, which, if we do not try to imitate (in or out of season with God's help), has us withering and dying because we are outside of a relationship with Him. The temple is cleared of wrongdoing to show us of repentance, which brings forth faith if we, now clean, by the blood of Jesus, can speak to those things that do not bear fruit in our lives. This faith in God with a clean heart gives us the ability to move mountains through prayer and believing that through Christ, what we say is of good report thus allowing us to move mountains through obedience to speak and act in good faith. Just for the fun of it, I looked up 'in good faith' in the dictionary and it says: In contract law, the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing is a general presumption that the parties to a contract will deal with each other honestly, fairly, and in good faith, so as to not destroy the right of the other party or parties to receive the benefits of the contract.

Reworded: In Jesus' law, the known covenant of good faith and fair dealing that the parties (God and us) deal with each other honestly, fairly and in good faith, so as to not destroy the righteousness that we have through Christ to receive the benefits (grace and mercy) of the covenant that Jesus died for.

#### Mark 11: 27-33, April 5

On arriving in Jerusalem Jesus went to the Temple and began to drive out the merchants and money changers. The chief priests and elders who were upset with Jesus, questioned Jesus as to who gave him authority to do such things. Jesus, in his infinite wisdom, saw that their questions were a trap. If Jesus responded on his own authority he might be arrested as a fanatic, if He responded on the authority of God he might be arrested on a charge of blasphemy. Jesus "turned the tables" and said that He would answer their questions if they first answered one question from Him. Jesus asked, "Was John the Baptist's work, in your opinion, human or divine?" Jesus's question created a major dilemma for the chief priests and elders. If they responded "from heaven", Jesus would say why did you not believe in it. If they responded "from men" they were afraid of the people, for all truly believed that John was a prophet. After much deliberation they answered Jesus, "We do not know." So Jesus said to them, "Neither do I tell you by what kind of authority I do these things."

The message behind this passage, I believe, is what happens to people who do not face the truth. Not facing the truth is like quicksand, as time goes on, the more we "struggle" with untruths the more difficult life becomes.

#### Mark 12: 1-17, April 6

If I were to title the parable (verses 1-12) I'd call it "A Risky Calculation" and verses 13-17 "Show Me."

Why? The businessman/landowner made a considerable investment. He invested time and financial resources as he planned, dug, built and planted his vineyard. He has made a commitment and has put himself at risk. He chose to trust the caretakers and their integrity to bring about a profit with his investment. Good Jews would remember the story in Isaiah 5:1-7 Israel who received blessings from God didn't reciprocate with faithful devotion. The critical issue in the parable was the failure of the tenants to respond faithfully with their tenant responsibility. Why? Verses 13-17 (the interrogation

of the leaders setting a trap for Jesus) may be a different narrative but the author is wanting us to see how much attention Jesus gives to the human heart in both stories. The great battle is deciding to what your heart's greatest love, hope and trust will be directed towards. We change when we change what we most worship. What do you worship?

Mark 12:18-34, April 7

I've never considered the Resurrection in such a way that I would no longer be married to my husband. I understand the vow "till death do us part" and if my husband passes before me I realise I'd be a widow, however I had never considered that in eternity we would no longer be husband and wife. Initially, this unsettled me and made me sad, but as I reflect on this passage a little more, I noticed I will be joined with God in that intimacy. I love being married to my husband and have known him most of my life, but God has known me since the beginning of time, before the creation of the universe!!! To be united in marriage on a human level is more than I could have ever asked or imagined, it is so special, sacred, vulnerable, and exciting. To be united with God, on a Spiritual level (The Message says "as it is with the angels now, all our ecstasies and intimacies then will be with God") that is more than my brain can comprehend and it doesn't make me sad and I don't have to fully understand it, just trust and believe it is true! So, thinking on the next section of the passage about the greatest commandment, to love the Lord with all my heart, mind, soul and strength -- prepares me, while still here on earth, for that eternal intimacy with God at the resurrection. If I do these things it is a foretaste of the amazing reward and uncomprehending future in eternity with Him, that starts right now. It also sums up the core of the Christian life, I think. If we love the Lord with all of our being how can we not be compelled to share that love with others so they too can know the intimacy of a relationship with God. To me knowing that I am to love others as I love myself means to be authentic and generous with others, in the sense that we ALL fall short of the glory of God and ALL have made mistakes, or have felt unworthy but we need to look at ourselves the way God does, as precious and unique and most of all His beLOVED children.

Mark 12: 35-44, April 8

This passage means giving, even if you have limited financial, spiritual or mental resources at the time of giving. God gave the widow at the end of the passage the means to donate financially, even she may not have been able to give physically in helping or guiding others. Even though the widow is not the main figure in this passage, so it seems, it is significant that she donates her money to the "cause" and then others are called to the attention of such a giving. What specifically does this passage mean to me? Those who observe and then write what they have seen, regardless of scenario, should be valued. There is always a give and take component in life. I wonder what the widow needed to take?

Mark 13: 1-13, April 9

When Jesus spoke about spreading the gospel word to all, and how people would be angry with this, I was upset with this, because I believe that people should not shun others for their beliefs.

I believe that if we do stand beside him that all will be saved and have eternal life!

### Mark 13: 14-37, April 10

Be aware of false prophets. Some will say that they are the Christ. When Christ returns he will find you and take you to heaven, in God's time.

### Mark 14: 1-11, April 11

#### Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Just before Passover, during a time when the chief priests, teachers and lawmakers were plotting and scheming to kill Jesus, Jesus was at a gathering in Simon the Leper's home. This was where a woman with a jar of perfume, broke the jar and poured the perfume over Jesus. Many there thought she was being wasteful of such an expensive item and rebuked her, but Jesus defended her telling them to leave her alone. He appreciated the beautiful offering He knew that his time was short and said to those at the gathering that she poured this on him to prepare his body for burial. This was only 2 days before the crucifixion and just before Judas betrayed him.

This passage is about kindness, respect and honour that was shown toward Jesus. This was seen to have been as valuable as a year's wage and this woman used that valuable gift to anoint Jesus. It was only something that would have been done for someone worthy of such a gift. It was also an example of Jesus' acceptance and gratitude for kindnesses that were bestowed upon him. He didn't rebuke the woman, he was gracious and kind in his acceptance of her offering.

### Mark 14: 12-26, April 12

This passage begins with Jesus needing a place to prepare to eat the Passover. Does each of us make room for Jesus and his priorities in our life? Jesus was betrayed. Although we might not want to admit it, are there times when we have betrayed our Lord? How? Lastly, how much do we appreciate the gift of communion?

### Mark 14:27-42, April 13

My sense of this passage is the disciples were just paying lip service to Jesus and they were reluctant to put their faith in what he was telling them. Perhaps there was a lack of trust in the Lord.

They did not want to commit themselves, perhaps out of fear or belief in what was about to occur. I think of doubting Thomas reading the verses.

### Mark 14: 43-65, April 14

This passage is about Jesus fulfilling the scriptures. He knows his time on earth has come, knows he will be betrayed, arrested and put on trial. He does not then answer any of the Priests' questions except to declare himself "the Son of Man". To the priests this is an outrageous claim worthy of death!

### Mark 14: 66-72, April 15

Are we willing to be known as followers of Jesus among people we're uncomfortable with or do not know? Jesus doesn't want us to be crying with shame and regret. He wants us to be happy to tell others that we're friends with him.

Mark 15:1-15, April 16

This passage has several choices that seem counter-intuitive: the Jewish council choosing to seek use of Roman law; Jesus choosing to stay silent; the crowd choosing to request the release of Barabbas; and Pilate, the authority figure, choosing to please the crowd. When are we able to stay silent in the face of accusation? When do we seek the "wrong thing" or give into the demands of others, against our own judgement? How can we recognize God in these moments and let His will be done?

Mark 15: 16-32, April 17

The story of Jesus' crucifixion is horrible. As well as the physical suffering, he was taunted as the "King of the Jews." Weirdly, a taunt of derision, and the sign over Jesus' head when he was crucified was *true* – more true than anyone observing the crucifixion ever understood at the time.

Mark 15: 33-39, April 18

This passage is full of darkness and foreboding. It is at the moment of Jesus' death that the Roman soldier names who Jesus really is. Jesus' death is the turning point, not only for him, but for us.

Mark 15: 40-47, April 19

Jesus' death seemed to be the end of it all. There are just practical arrangements about his burial which need to be made. But Jesus' death is not only an end, but a transformation.

Mark 16: 1-20, April 20

What does it take for us to trust God's Word and follow it?

On two occasions Jesus told them that he would be killed and rise on the third day (Mark 9:31 & 10:34). But when the women saw the empty tomb and heard the angel's words... they did nothing. When Mary Magdalene reported meeting and speaking with Jesus, she was not believed... and they did nothing. When two disciples reported that they had spoken and traveled with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, they, too, were not believed... and they did nothing.

"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

And believing leads to action (Mark 16:20). What will you do?

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take him at his word,  
Just to rest upon his promise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord." (Hymn 414)