



Parkway Fellowship

EASTER 2020 • THE PLAN FOR DISAPPOINTMENTS • MARK 15:21-6:8 • 4/12/2020

MAIN POINT

Just because I don't know God's plan, doesn't mean there isn't one.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Why do you think God chooses to work in ways that surprise us?

What's one unexpected way God has worked in your life lately? How do you react if you don't sense God working?

Many of us are planners and do not like change or surprises. When things don't go the way we expect them to, we wonder if God has forgotten us. This year, the message of Easter is being heard around the world in that very context. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that just because we don't know God's plan doesn't mean He doesn't have one. The resurrection is the reason we have hope. The same power God used to raise Jesus from the dead is not at work in every person who believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord!

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 15:21-41.

What was the irony in the sign that was posted on the cross (v. 26)?

The crime for which the person was being crucified was specified on a whitened board fastened above the criminal. By posting this sign on the cross, "The King of the Jews," Pilate was simply

attempting to further humiliate the Jews. The intent was to communicate that Jesus' fate would be shared by anyone else who tried to assert their authority against Rome.

What caused the most anguish for Jesus on the cross—the physical pain or being forsaken by God the Father? Why did God turn his back on his Son?

When, if ever, have you felt forsaken by God? What happened that particularly made you feel that way? How do you feel about the fact that Jesus experienced the same thing?

The centurion was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God by the way he saw Jesus die. What has convinced you?

Generally the victim of crucifixion was exhausted and unconscious at the point of death. Jesus' loud cry emphasizes that He voluntarily gave up his life. Perhaps what Mark mentioned here is the last word in the phrase "It is finished" (John 19:30). This echoes the enigmatic ending of Psalm 22, which asserted that as future generations tell their children about the Lord, they will declare that "He has done it." Jesus' work of securing salvation for humanity is accomplished.

What was significant about the curtain in the sanctuary being torn in two from top to bottom (v. 38)? What did the curtain represent? Why is it no longer needed?

There were two curtains in the temple. An outer curtain separated the sanctuary from the courtyard. The inner curtain covered the Holy of Holies where only the high priest was admitted. It is not clear which curtain was torn. However, the point is clear—that which stood between the people and God was abolished by Jesus' death.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 15:42-16:8.

What happened to the women when they got to the gravesite? Why would they be alarmed? If that happened to you, how would you respond?

What were the women to report to the disciples? What do you think the disciples had been doing for the last three days?

In the same way that Mark reported the crucifixion of Jesus in simple, stark terms (15:24), so too he described His resurrection in a plain, unadorned way. The phrase is, literally, "He has been raised," showing that God is the one who accomplished this great act. Christ's resurrection demonstrates that the cry of the centurion was accurate: "This man really was God's Son!" (Rom. 1:4).

Eventually, of course, the women did report what happened (Matt 28:8; Luke 24:10). But here, they were afraid. This was the same sort of fear that the disciples felt on the Sea of Galilee when they discovered that Jesus had power over the elements themselves (4:41). This is how human beings respond in the face of the supernatural. Thus, the gospel of Mark ends on this note of astonishment and fear that was so characteristic of how he described people's reaction to a miracle or supernatural event (2:12; 4:41; 5:15,33,42; 9:6). There is also the hint of mystery and secret, again characteristic of Mark. The ending is abrupt, but fully in keeping with Mark's style of writing.

Has there ever been a time when a "stone" (a doubt, a negative attitude or uncertainty) blocked your own view of the empty tomb? Who helped roll that stone away for you?

How would you answer the arguments that: (a) the disciples stole the body; (b) the cool of the tomb revived Jesus; (c) the disciples made up the tale of the Resurrection?

How important is it to your faith that the tomb was empty (1 Cor. 15:12–19)?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In this week's message, we learned the following three points of application: God has a plan for every obstacle I face. Let Jesus into my disappointments. Don't miss the point of Easter!

How does it encourage you right now to know that God has a plan for every obstacle you face?

What would it look like for you to let Jesus into your disappointments this week?

In your own words, what would you say is the point of Easter? Who is someone you can share that with in the days ahead?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for His work on the cross. Praise Christ for being God made flesh who died and who rose. Thank God for the resurrection which is the power of salvation, and invite Him to display His resurrection power in your daily life as you seek to know Him and make Him known.

COMMENTARY

MARK 15:21-16:8

15:21. Roman soldiers had the right to press citizens of subject nations into compulsory service (Mt 5:41), so they forced Simon to carry Jesus' cross. Simon was a Jewish Cyrenian from the north coast of Africa. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, indicating that readers in Rome probably knew these men (Rm 16:13). Simon apparently became a Christian due to this experience.

15:22. Golgotha is Aramaic for Skull Place. The traditional site of the crucifixion is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located outside the city walls (Lv 24:14; Num 15:35-36; Heb 13:12).

15:23. Wine mixed with myrrh was a primitive narcotic. The offer fulfilled Ps 69:21.

15:24. They crucified Him is all Mark wrote about the main event of the gospel. The crucifixion took place on Friday, now known as Good Friday. That the four soldiers of the execution squad divided His clothes and cast lots for them fulfilled Ps 22:18 (cp. Jn 19:23-24).

15:25. Nine in the morning is literally "the third hour." Jews reckoned time of the daylight from sunrise.

15:26. The charge on which a person was condemned was often written on a placard and hung around his neck. In Jesus' case, it was nailed to His cross (Jn 19:19). All four Gospels record the words differently (cp. Mt 27:37; Lk 23:38; Jn 19:19), possibly because the inscription was trilingual (Jn 19:20). THE KING OF THE JEWS ironically proclaimed the truth about Jesus.

15:27. Criminals is the word used to describe Barabbas in Jn 18:40 (cp. Mk 14:48). Jesus' crucifixion between "criminals" was meant as a parody of His kingship (as if He had attendants on either side) but by God's design the whole event really was His royal enthronement. The phrase one on His right and one on His left recalls the request of James and John (John 10:37,40).

15:29-30. Insults means "blasphemies." Those who passed by were thus guilty of the very thing for which the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus (14:64). The bystanders' insults and shaking of their heads fulfilled Ps 22:7 and Lam 2:15.

15:31. Once again the chief priests led the mockery of Jesus. Their derision along with that of the scribes went to the heart of Jesus' mission: To save others, Jesus refused to save Himself (10:45).

15:32. The religious leaders' mockery recalls the second charge Jesus faced before the Sanhedrin (14:61). Mark reported that the two crucified with Jesus also taunted Him. One of them repented (Lk 23:39-43).

15:33. Noon was literally "the sixth hour," and three in the afternoon was "the ninth hour." The darkness was supernatural and represented God's judgment (Ex 10:21-23; Am 8:9-10).

15:34. At 3:00 p.m. Jesus cried out with a loud voice the Aramaic phrase, Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni. As usual, Mark provided a translation. Even when Jesus felt most forsaken by God, He affirmed His relationship with His Father— My God, My God, quoting the opening words of Ps 22:1. Jesus endured God's wrath as the sin-bearer.

15:35-36. Perhaps bystanders mistook Eloi for Elijah (Aram Eli) since there was a tradition in Judaism that Elijah would return (9:11-13; Mal 4:5). Sour wine, made with vinegar and water, was a drink of the soldiers, not the wine of verse 23. This action fulfilled Ps 69:21.

15:37. The content of Jesus' loud cry (reported by all three Synoptic Gospels) is specified in Jn 19:30—"It is finished." Luke recorded Jesus' final words (Lk 23:46).

15:38. The curtain of the sanctuary hung before the holy of holies in the temple. Its tearing symbolizes unhindered access to God, made possible because of Jesus' atonement for sin on the cross (Heb 6:19-20; 9:3; 10:19-22).

15:39. The Gentile centurion who presided over the execution was the first in Mark's Gospel to confess Jesus as God's Son (cp. 1:11,24; 3:11; 5:9; 9:7). His confession matched Mark's opening statement (1:1).

15:40. This is the first reference to Mary Magdalene in Mark. Jesus expelled seven demons from her (16:9; Lk 8:2). She came from Magdala on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses is called "the other Mary" in Mt 27:61. Possibly she was the mother of James the son of Alphaeus (Mk 3:18). Salome is named only in Mark (v. 40; 16:1). She was the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee (Mt 20:20; 27:56).

15:41. In Mark, only women (v. 41; 1:31) and angels (1:13) serve or help (Gk diakoneo) Jesus. The many other women who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem did so for Passover.

15:42. Mark hastened to explain for his Gentile readers/hearers the Jewish technical term "Preparation Day." The Jewish Sabbath was Saturday; therefore the Preparation Day was Friday. Here is a clear indication that Jesus died on Friday. The word "evening" refers to the hour or two before and after sunset. Here it is obviously the hour or two before sunset when the Jewish

Sabbath began. The burial had to be completed before sunset in order not to profane the Sabbath and to comply with Deut 21:22-23.

15:43. John was the forerunner of Jesus in death as well as life, but, whereas John's own disciples took whatever risks were necessary to bury his body, Jesus' close disciples did not. The exact location of "Arimathea" is uncertain. It probably is to be identified with the Ramathaim (two heights) of 1 Sam 1:1 and the modern village of Rentis about twenty-two miles northwest of Jerusalem and fifteen miles east of modern Tel Aviv-Yafo (ancient Joppa). Either Joseph still lived there or was born there.

The word "Council" is a reference to a Sanhedrin, but whether it was the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem or one of the local councils (the one at Arimathea?) is uncertain. Probably it was the former. If so, Joseph did not vote to condemn Jesus (cf. Luke 23:50-51). Perhaps he was absent; perhaps he abstained; perhaps he voted against condemnation (but note the word "all" in 14:64). Mark did not state that Joseph was a disciple, and some have suggested that he was a pious Jew who buried Jesus out of a motive of sympathy or obedience to Deut 21:23. Matthew 27:57, however, says that he was a disciple; John 19:38, that he was a secret disciple. The word translated "prominent" in the NIV could mean that or respected, graceful, noble, influential, or even wealthy. Matthew evidently interpreted Mark's word in the last way (27:57). Luke 23:50 adds that he was a "good and upright man." John 19:39 states that he was assisted by Nicodemus.

The statement that Joseph was "waiting for the kingdom of God" does not prove but probably implies that he was a disciple of Jesus. (Pious Jews were also expecting the establishment of the kingdom by God's Messiah.) The kingdom or reign of God was the primary subject of Jesus' preaching; and here at the end of his Gospel, Mark appears to have presented one who associated the kingdom with Jesus. The statement "went boldly" should not be taken lightly because there was great risk in associating oneself with a person who had been executed for treason. Probably Mark intended Joseph to be an example to his readers/hearers to act boldly on behalf of Jesus.

15:44. Pilate was surprised because it often took two or three days for crucified persons to die. The centurion was probably the same as the one in v. 39. Textual evidence probably and internal considerations certainly favor the reading "dead a long time" (GNB) rather than "had already died."

15:45. Release of a body to someone who was not a relative was unusual. Joseph, however, may have been the only person who was willing and able to bury Jesus. The disciples had fled; the women were not in a position to ask for the body or bury it; Jesus' mother evidently had left the

scene (cf. John 19:26-27); and there is no evidence that Jesus' brothers and sisters were in Jerusalem at the time. That Pilate was willing to release the body of one who had been executed for treason may further indicate that he recognized Jesus' innocence. Also he may not have wanted to offend the Jews by leaving a body on the cross overnight. Pilate's inquiry provides evidence that Jesus really died. The word in the best attested text of Mark is "corpse" rather than "body" as in the best attested text of v. 43. This example of Markan candor was omitted by Luke and the best attested text of Matt 27:58 and changed to "body" in some manuscripts of Mark.

15:46. Inasmuch as he was well-to-do, Joseph may have had servants to assist him, but none of the Gospels mentions such a thing; nor would it detract from the virtue of his deed. The purchase of the linen cloth probably has no significance for dating the crucifixion. None of the Synoptics mentions anointing before burial (contrast John 19:39-40) but that the women intended to do it later. None of the accounts mentions washing the body, but that probably was done hurriedly.

Burial in caves or chambers carved out of rock—the latter often in abandoned quarries—was much more common among ancient Jews than burial in the ground. Matthew 27:60; Luke 23:53; John 19:41 indicate that the tomb had not been used previously. (Reuse of tombs was quite common.) Only the last passage indicates that the place was a garden. Such tombs were usually sealed with a large rock to keep out animals and grave robbers. The rock might be round or flat as available, but fancy tombs often had a disk-shaped rock similar to a millstone which was rolled back and forth in a channel. The channel sloped toward the opening so that it was easy to cover the hole but difficult to remove the stone and uncover it.

15:47. Two of the three women in v. 41 are mentioned again here, although Mary is described as the mother of Joseph with no mention of James the younger. Actually nothing in the Greek text here or in 16:1 corresponds to the word "mother." It indicates only that Mary belonged to or was related to Joseph (v. 47) and James (v. 1). Theoretically the idea could be daughter of or wife of as well as mother of, but v. 40 explicitly states that Mary was the mother of the two.

16:1-2. After the Sabbath ended, three women who witnessed the crucifixion (15:40), two of whom also saw Jesus buried (15:47), bought spices to anoint His body (16:1). Mark identified these women as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. The women came to the tomb very early Sunday morning when the sun had risen.

The women's action demonstrated their great devotion. By anointing Jesus' body with spices, they wanted to express their love and probably also to reduce the stench of the decomposing body.

16:3. As the women walked to the tomb, they discussed the heavy stone that had been rolled in front of the entrance of the tomb. They evidently did not know about the tomb's sealing or the posting of the Roman guard (Matt. 27:66).

16:4. When the three women arrived at the tomb, they discovered that the stone had been rolled away. Mark noted that the stone was extremely large. The passive voice (had been rolled away) represents the divine passive, a reverent way of expressing the fact that God had rolled away the stone. Matthew reported that He performed this action through an angel (Matt. 28:2). The removal of the stone was a supernatural event. God removed the stone to demonstrate to the women that Jesus had risen from the grave.

16:5. Once inside the tomb, the women saw a young man dressed in a white robe. Although Mark did not identify him explicitly as an angel, his white robe suggested that he was (see Matt. 28:2-5). Confronted with God's messenger, the women were amazed. The verb translated were amazed means terrified, alarmed, or dumbfounded.

16:6. The angel spoke reassuring words to calm the women's fear. He knew for whom they were looking. He identified this One as Jesus the Nazarene. This important name identified Jesus as a real Person who could be located in history and geography. The angel affirmed His identify as the One who had been crucified. The angel then spoke the following words of revelation: "He has risen." God had raised Jesus from the dead. The angel then invited the women to see the evidence of the empty tomb. The place where they laid Him was a shelf, or niche, carved in the rock. An empty tomb alone, however, only raised the question, What happened to Jesus' body? God sent His messenger to interpret the meaning of the empty tomb and to reveal the reality of the resurrection. These faithful women were the first to receive this good news.

16:7-8. God gave these women the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the good news of the resurrection: "Go, tell His disciples and Peter." The disciples were mentioned because they had deserted Jesus (14:50). Peter was singled out because he had denied Jesus and needed reassurance that the Lord had not excluded him from the group of disciples. Jesus had forgiven and restored these men to fellowship with Him. The phrase going ahead meant that Jesus would precede them and meet them in Galilee.

The angel's presence and words caused the women to flee, trembling and astonished (16:8). At first their fear and astonishment prevented them from sharing the good news. Eventually they did deliver their message to the disciples (vv. 9-11; see Luke 24:9). Mark emphasized the mystery and awesomeness of the resurrection.

The women were the first to know about the resurrection and the first witnesses of that good news. God works through those who are faithful in their ministries as these women were. Despite the disciples' failure, Jesus promised to meet them in Galilee. Jesus always seeks another opportunity of fellowship and ministry with us as His disciples even when we have failed Him. Jesus' resurrection guarantees victory over death for believers. Hope, not despair, should characterize our lives. We can express our gratitude to the Lord for all He has suffered and done for us by our obedience and willingness to serve Him.