

main course

the story that never ends: bible study 4

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Bible Studies by Lance Stone based on John Proctor's 'Mark's Jesus'

Bible Study 4: Death and Resurrection: the story that never ends.

AIM

To consider the role played by women in the last part of Mark's gospel and to see how this speaks to us today.

YOU WILL NEED

Bibles or at least copies of Mark's gospel for everyone in the group.

A copy of 'Mark's Jesus', by John Proctor, available from Church House bookshop or the Grove website, either as hard copy or as download <http://www.grovebooks.co.uk>

The booklet is also reviewed on the Vision4life website. You don't need one for everyone but have it available for those who want to follow this up.

GETTING STARTED: JESUS' DEATH.

The last Bible study in this series touched on the role that women play in Mark's Gospel. In this one we come to the end of the Gospel and we will approach this by continuing to focus on the women in the story, and the part they play in his death and resurrection.

Read: Mark 14: 3-9. Jesus' immanent death is introduced here by the action of this woman, which is interpreted by Jesus as an anointing for his death.

Discuss:

- i) What motivated this woman? What does this tell us about Christian service? What place is there in the church for 'social work'?
- ii) Church language is full of references to 'loving Jesus'. What does it mean for you to say, if you can, that you 'love Jesus'?
- iii) Read again v.4-5. Did the people who said this not have a point? Is the church guilty of mis-spending valuable resources? What should be the church's priorities?

Read: Mark 15: 40-41

Discuss:

- i) Is there any significance in the fact that women are specifically mentioned as watching from a distance. Where are the men? Is there anything particular about women and their ministry that is shown up by these verses?
- ii) Would anyone feel able to share the experience of having sat with a loved one who was dying? What are the emotions? What is achieved by being there?

MOVING ON: JESUS' RESURRECTION.

Read: Mark 16: 1-8 (which ends with the words ' They said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.')

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One of the mysteries of Mark's Gospel is certainly its ending. In fact there are three possible endings to the Gospel: verses 1-8, verses 9-10, or verses 9-20 and there has been much debate as to which is the correct one.

Read: the other two possible endings and compare all three.

John Proctor supports the view of many scholars that the two longer endings have been added on at later dates, probably precisely because ending at v.8 is so abrupt. In that case it still leaves the possibility that something has been lost after verse 8. Proctor points out at some point early on the Gospel took the form of a Codex, a sheaf of paper folded and stitched down the spine, and that the last page of this somehow got detached. In that case we will never know what the original ending was.

However it may just be that the original ending was verse 8 and that the last verse is in keeping with the rest of the Gospel.

Discuss:

- i) In what ways is v.8 in keeping with the rest of Mark? What might it have to say about us as Jesus' disciples?
- ii) Discuss what we might learn from this ending, assuming the Gospel does end at v.8. What might Mark be trying to say to us?
- iii) Would anyone prefer one of the other endings?

Read: John Proctor's concluding paragraph on p.23 of *Mark's Jesus*.

Does this make sense of this ending?

Prayer time

Are there any issues that have arisen from your discussion that might prompt prayers? You might include those who have been recently bereaved; those we know who find faith very hard and struggle to believe the good news.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

- What was the most helpful thing?
- What was the least helpful thing?
- What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more bible studies like this on the Gospel of Mark there are three more in this series on the website.

We hope to offer other Bible studies on Mark for the rest of the bible year. Look out for them on the website.