

## 4 more studies from the Book of Mark (Part 5)

### **Please Note the following:**

1. It is not necessary to look up all the Bible cross references listed in a particular question; your Growth Group Leader will summarize these Bible cross references for you.
2. Just a reminder that sometimes in our Growth Groups, people feel comfortable sharing very personal and sensitive things about their lives. This information **MUST BE CONFIDENTIAL and NEVER LEAVE THE GROUP**

## Study 1 – Open my Eyes, Lord!

Mark 10:46-52

*(Sermon on 2<sup>nd</sup> November)*

### Read Mark 10:46-52

1. Where is Jesus? Who is Bartimaeus and what is his condition?

*Jesus was at Jericho [15 miles/24km from Jerusalem]. Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”) was a blind beggar sitting by the road outside Jericho. He could not see physically but had spiritual insight to recognize Jesus as the “Son of David,” the promised Messiah.*

2. How does Bartimaeus demonstrate his faith? What title does he use for Jesus and what does that tell us?

*He cried out persistently for mercy, calling Jesus “Son of David.” Even when people told him to be quiet, he kept shouting — showing bold, determined faith that trusted Jesus’ power and compassion. “Son of David” is a title used for the promised Messiah King who God promised to send; this title signifies that the promised Messiah would be a descendant of King David who was promised a lasting/forever dynasty.*

***In Jeremiah 33:17 it says “For this is what the LORD says: ‘David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Israel’”***

*By using this title, Bartimaeus believes Jesus is this promised Messiah. However, the title “Son of David” was often seen as a military or conquering King title; which is a misguided theology; but nevertheless, it’s Bartimaeus’ faith that counts, not his theology!*

3. What is the crowd’s reaction and why do they react that way?

*At first, the crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus, thinking he was annoying and showing little compassion for him. But when Jesus stopped and called for Bartimaeus to come forward, their attitude changed — they encouraged him to get up. Jesus’ response revealed His care for individuals others overlook.*

4. How did Bartimaeus show persistence in seeking Jesus?

He kept calling until Jesus answered, and when told to come, he threw aside his cloak — possibly his only possession — and hurried to Jesus. This act symbolized leaving everything behind to follow Him — **Jesus is all Bartimaeus needs!**

5. **Ponder:** What can we learn about persistence in prayer? (see Matthew 7:7-8) Even when the crowd told Bartimaeus to be quiet; **he persisted calling out to Jesus.** That's a persistence prayer. **This persistence showed genuine faith** — He truly believed in Jesus' power and that Jesus could heal him. We also see that **Jesus honours persistent faithful prayer.** Lessons for us: a) **don't stop praying, even when God seems silent;** b) **keep trusting that He hears and will answer in His perfect timing and perfect way;** c) **True faith keeps calling out "Lord, have mercy" knowing Jesus is willing and able to respond!**

**As Matthew 7:7-8 says ASK — A=Ask; S=Seek and K=Knock — and keep on asking, seeking and knocking the door down!**

*"Take the gates of heaven and shake them with thy vehemence, as though thou wouldst pull them up post and bar and all. Stand at Mercy's door and take no denial. Knock, and knock, and knock again, as though thou wouldst shake the very spheres, but what thou wouldst obtain an answer to thy cries. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Cold prayers never win God's ear. Draw thy bow with thy full strength, if thou wouldst send thy arrow up so high as heaven."* (Spurgeon)

6. Why did Jesus ask Bartimaeus "**what do you want me to do for you?**" in verse 51? By asking the question, Jesus invited Bartimaeus to **declare his trust** that Jesus could heal him. Bartimaeus didn't ask for money or sympathy — he said, "Rabbi, I want to see." His request showed **faith in Jesus' power** and **confidence in His mercy.** Also, Jesus asks this for the benefit of the people watching on.

*"Rest assured that those are the best prayers in all respects, if they be earnest and sincere, which go most directly to the point. You know there is a way of praying in the closet, and praying in the family, in which you do not ask for anything. You say a great many good things, introduce much of your own experience, review the*

*doctrines of grace very thoughtfully, but you do not ask for anything in particular. Such prayer is always uninteresting to listen to, and I think it must be rather tedious to those who offer it.” (Spurgeon)*

7. What miracle did Jesus perform?

*Jesus restored Bartimaeus’ sight completely. Also, as it was Bartimaeus’ faith that healed him, Jesus is also healing him spiritually as well as physically.*

8. How did Bartimaeus respond after being healed? What can we learn from him?

*Instead of returning home or pursuing his own interests, Bartimaeus chose to follow Jesus as a disciple. The road they were on led to Jerusalem — and ultimately the cross — so Bartimaeus joined Jesus on the path of costly discipleship, just like Jesus’ other disciples.*

*We can learn a few things from Bartimaeus:*

- a. Faith in Jesus, leads to following Jesus*
- b. Being grateful to Jesus, should lead us to take action – obey/follow Jesus*
- c. Discipleship is the natural response to the grace of Jesus!*

***There is irony here too – the blind man can see who Jesus really is – whereas Jesus close disciples are struggling to work out who Jesus is?***

9. **Ponder:** How does this story highlight faith and obedience?

- a. Faith recognizes who Jesus is.*
- b. Faith perseveres, despite opposition or objections*
- c. There is expectant faith here – Bartimaeus threw his cloak aside and jumped up to meet Jesus*
- d. Obedience/Following Jesus, comes immediately after genuine faith*
- e. Bartimaeus is a paradigm of a true disciple of Jesus – “he followed Jesus on the road (to Jerusalem – to death)” – It’s especially a stark contrast with last week’s story of James and John looking to glorify themselves.***

10. What does this miracle reveal about Jesus?

- a. Jesus is the Messiah*

- b. Jesus has the power that only God has – that’s because Jesus = God!*
- c. Jesus is full of compassion*
- d. Jesus always responds to genuine faith in Him*
- e. Jesus is worth obeying and following*

11. **Ponder:** In what ways are we blind? How do the following verses clarify this?  
*Before we put our trust in Jesus, we are spiritually blind and we need to have our eyes opened to who Jesus is [the Son of God] and why He came [to fix sin and death] and what He offers us [forgiveness and eternal life in Heaven]*

### **Isaiah 42:1-7**

*Through Isaiah, God promises a servant who will come [Jesus] and verse 7 – He will open eyes that are blind [not just those physically blind – but those blind to God’s salvation in Jesus] and to free captives [those captive in their sin and rebellion against God] and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness [the darkness of sin – so that they can come into the light of Jesus].*

*Our natural state is **spiritual blindness** — unable to see God’s truth — and only **Christ** can open our eyes to see Him clearly.*

**Isaiah 29:18** - In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.

*God promises a day of **spiritual renewal**, when people who were blind to His Word will understand it. We are blind when we **ignore or misunderstand God’s Word**, but the Lord gives sight through His **revelation and renewal**.*

### **John 9:13-41**

*The Pharisees investigate how Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath. Some of them accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath ‘working’ laws; others doubt that the man was blind in the first place until it was verified by the man’s parents that he was blind from birth. They even interrogate the man twice to verify his story that Jesus healed him! The man puts the Pharisees to shame and says “nobody has ever heard of opening eyes of a man born blind. If this man was not from God, he could*

*do nothing!” But the Pharisees said the man was steeped in sin at birth, and threw him out of the synagogue.*

*Jesus confronts the Pharisees and says they are spiritually blind – and Jesus says “I have come into the world, so that the blind [this blind man – who can see both physically and spiritually] will see and the those who see [the Pharisees who can see physically], will become blind [the Pharisees are spiritually blind to God’s truth and the truth of His Son]*

*We are blind when we **refuse to recognize who Jesus is** or when our **pride and religious self-confidence** stop us from seeing our need for Him. True sight comes from **humble faith** in Christ.*

## **2 Corinthians 4:4-6**

*The ‘god of this age’ [Satan] blinds people to the truth of the gospel so they cannot see the light of Jesus’ truth and glory. We are blind when our minds are darkened by unbelief, distraction, or worldly values. But God shines His light into our hearts to reveal the knowledge of His glory in Jesus Christ – and opens our eyes to the truth.*

## **Ephesians 1:17-18**

*Here, Paul urges us to keep asking God to give us spiritual insight. And he pray that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened so we know the hope [of Heaven] to which we have been called. Sometimes we forget who we are in Jesus and lose sight of His promises; so we must pray, like Paul does, for hearts to be continually open to the Spirit and the Word.*

## **Revelation 3:17-18**

*The context is, Jesus speaks to the Church of Laodicea and says the church says ‘I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing’. But Jesus says to the church ‘but you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, **blind** and naked’*

*The church in Laodicea was **spiritually complacent**, thinking it was doing well when it wasn’t. We can be like that sometimes. We are blind when we **rely on our***

*own strength or success instead of Jesus. Jesus warns against this complacency here!*

12. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 10:46-52**?

**Isaiah 35:5-6 - “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.”**

*Isaiah 35 is a prophecy of the Messianic age — when God would come to save His people and restore creation’s brokenness. This prophecy was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus [Immanuel = God with us]*

*When Jesus opened the eyes of Bartimaeus, it was a direct fulfilment of this prophecy: the Messiah [Jesus] has come, and the blind can now see! Isaiah also speaks of other miracles; the lame leaping like a deer; the mute speaking. And water in the desert. Jesus coming is a work of RE-CREATION – fixing the broken **PHYSICAL** world. But He’s also come to fix the broken **SPIRITUAL** world.*

*Bartimaeus healing is because of His faith – so Bartimaeus’ healing is both physical and spiritual.*

*Jesus’ coming also shows that His miracles weren’t just random acts of kindness — they were signs that God’s kingdom had arrived through Him.*

**Psalm 146:8 - The Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous.**

*This Psalm praises God for His compassion and justice. When Jesus heals Bartimaeus, He is doing **exactly what the Lord does** — giving sight to the blind and lifting up the humble. It reveals Jesus as the **Lord God in action**, showing the very character of God in human form.*

*Jesus’ healing of Bartimaeus is not just a miracle — it’s a revelation of who He is: **the Lord who gives sight and lifts who are bowed down.***

13. How do the following verses give us a response to Mark 10:46-52?

**Acts 26:15-18**

*In this passage the Apostle Paul recalls how he became a Christian. He was confronted by a blinding light on the road to Damascus and Jesus spoke to him and changed Paul from a persecutor of Christians to an evangelist to the Gentiles. Paul was temporarily blinded and then given the job “to open their [Gentiles] eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus”.*

*Just as Bartimaeus’s eyes were opened physically and spiritually, Paul’s eyes were opened physically (after temporary blindness) and spiritually (when he was convicted of the wrong he was doing to Christians) and was then called by Jesus to help **open the spiritual eyes of the Gentiles**.*

*When Jesus heals our spiritual blindness, He calls us to **share that light** with others still in darkness. Our response is to become **witnesses** who lead people to forgiveness and faith.*

### **Ephesians 5:8-9**

*Bartimaeus went from **sitting in darkness to walking in the light**, following Jesus along the road. Our response to His mercy is **to live as children of light** — showing God’s goodness, righteousness, and truth in our actions.*

### **2 Timothy 2:24-26**

*We are to respond with kindness and gentleness, teaching and helping those who are spiritually blind find sight in Christ — just as Jesus did with Bartimaeus.*

### **Matthew 5:14-16**

*Once Bartimaeus was healed, his life became a **living testimony** of Jesus’ mercy — he followed Jesus openly. Our response is the same: to **shine His light** through good works and faith so others will see the love of Jesus in us and give glory to God [that’s actually our Vision] at church ‘to transform our community with the love of Jesus’*

What’s the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 10:46-52**

**Jesus opens the eyes of those who call to Him in Faith**



OR

Lord, open my eyes, so I can tell others how Jesus opened my eyes!

OR

We are lights for the world – don't let Satan put out your light!



**What light globe moment did you have?**

**We are all light globes!**

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**Finish in prayer:** We thank You for opening the eyes of Bartimaeus and showing us that You alone can bring true sight. We confess that we are often blind to Your presence, Your purposes, and the needs of others. Please open the eyes of our hearts to see You more clearly, to trust You more deeply, and to follow You more faithfully. Remove our spiritual blindness, Lord, and fill us with the light of Your truth and mercy. Like Bartimaeus, may we rise quickly when You call and walk with You in gratitude and faith. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## Study 2 – The King who demands genuine faith!

Mark 11:1-33

*(Sermon on 9<sup>th</sup> November)*

### Read Mark 11:1-11

1. Where was Jesus approaching, and what instructions did He give His disciples? (verses 1–2)?

*Jesus was approaching Jerusalem, near Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives. Remember, Jesus is going to Jerusalem to die!*

*It is the festival of Passover!*

*He told two of His disciples to go into the village ahead, where they would find a **colt tied up**—one that no one had ever ridden—and to **untie it and bring it to Him**.*

2. What details in verses 2–7 show Jesus' foreknowledge and authority?
  - *Jesus knew exactly where the colt would be and its condition ("never ridden").*
  - *He also knew what the owners would say and instructed the disciples how to answer ("The Lord needs it and will send it back shortly").*
  - *Everything happened just as Jesus had said, demonstrating His divine knowledge, authority, and control over events.*
  - *Some commentators say that Jesus "prearranged this" – but this is no need to assume this. The text doesn't hint that there was prior arrangement. Plus verse 6 emphasizes things happened "just as He told them". Plus Jesus knowledge goes beyond normal planning: He knows the colt will be tied, never ridden and someone will question the disciples. Also, the phrase "the Lord has need of it" carries divine authority. Mark's Gospel is all about revealing who Jesus is and the authority He has. Mark wants us to see Jesus' kingly authority and fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9.*
3. What is the crowd's reaction and why do they react that way? Why is it significant that Jesus rode a colt that had never been ridden? (verse 2)?

*The crowd welcomed Jesus with great excitement and joy, spreading their cloaks and palm [John's Gospel] branches on the road as a sign of honor and submission.*

*Riding a colt that had never been ridden signifies:*

- **Purity and sacred purpose**—animals used for holy tasks were to be unused (cf. Numbers 19:2).
- It also **fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9** about the **humble King** arriving on a donkey's colt.
- The crowd likely viewed this as a royal procession, expecting the arrival of the Messiah-King.

**But note: They are probably expecting a Military Messiah not a Peaceful Messiah.**

*i. The Rabbis of Jesus' day had several different theories regarding how the Messiah would come to Jerusalem. Based on Daniel 7:13, some thought the Messiah would come as a majestic conqueror. Based on Zechariah 9:9, some thought that the Messiah would come in a lowly and humble way, riding on a colt.*

*ii. In the days of Jesus, some Rabbis reconciled these by saying that the Messiah would come humbly to an unworthy Israel but mightily to a worthy Israel. Since Israel considered itself worthy, they only looked for a triumphant, conquering Messiah.*

*“To Jesus it made no difference that this was an unbroken colt. He was the Creator come into this scene as a Man, and as such all the lower creatures were subject to Him.” (Ironsides)*

#### 4. How did the people respond to Jesus' entry? (verses 8-10)

*The people:*

- Spread cloaks [See 2 Kings 19:13] and branches [palm branches in John's Gospel] on the road (a gesture used for kings).
- Shouted “Hosanna!” and “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
- Proclaimed, “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”
- Their response was one of praise, expectation, and hope for deliverance.

*They see Jesus as David's descendant the promised Messiah and forever King!*

*For most of His ministry, Jesus did everything He could to discourage people from publicly celebrating Him as the Messiah. Here Jesus went out of His way to invite public praise and adoration as the Messiah.*

*In fact, when the religious leaders of His day objected, He told them “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.” (Luke 19:40)*

5. What does “**Hosanna**” mean? (verses 9 and 10)

*Hosanna is a Hebrew expression meaning “Save us now!” or “Save, we pray!” Over time, it became a joyful shout of praise—acknowledging that salvation was coming!*

6. How did this event fulfil Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:25–26?

*Zechariah 9:9 foretold: “See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.”*

*Jesus’ entry on a colt fulfilled this exactly, showing Him as the peaceful, righteous King.*

*Psalm 118:25–26 includes the cry “Lord, save us!” (Hosanna) and “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

*The crowd’s words show this psalm was also a prophecy and these words identify Jesus as the Messiah sent by God.*

*We call this event the “Triumphal Entry,” but it was a strange kind of triumph. If you spoke of Jesus’ Triumphal Entry to a Roman, they would have laughed at you. For them, a Triumphal Entry was an honor granted to a Roman general who won a complete and decisive victory and had killed at least 5,000 enemy soldiers. When the general returned to Rome, they had an elaborate parade. First came the treasures captured from the enemy, then the prisoners. His armies marched by unit by unit, and finally the general rode in a golden chariot pulled by magnificent horses. Priests burned incense in his honor and the crowds shouted his name and praised him. The procession ended at the arena, where some of the prisoners were thrown to wild animals for the entertainment of the crowd. That was a Triumphal Entry, not a Galilean Peasant sitting on a few coats set out on a pony.*

7. What expectations do you think the crowd have of Jesus?

*There expectations were that Jesus would:*

- *Restore Israel's kingdom, overthrowing Roman rule and occupation.*
- *Reign as a political and military Messiah like King David did.*
- *Bring national liberation rather than spiritual salvation.*
- *Their understanding of Jesus' kingship was **earthly/physical**, not **spiritual!***

8. **Ponder:** Why might Jesus have entered Jerusalem quietly and without military power?

- *To show His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).*
- *To fulfil prophecy {Zechariah 9:9} of a humble and peaceful King, not a conqueror.*
- *To reveal the paradox that true victory would come not by force, but through the cross and resurrection.*
- *His quiet entry contrasts with worldly displays of power, revealing God's unexpected way of salvation. The ways of God are mysterious and majestic!*

*As Jesus rode in "He looked around at everything" (v11): Jesus came as the Messiah to Jerusalem, not as a mighty general to conquer the Romans. He came first to look at the standing of the people of God, and to make an inspection. In the rest of Mark 11, we see the results of this inspection.*

*i. Malachi 3:1-3 speaks prophetically of the Messiah coming to the temple in careful assessment.*

*ii. We see again the courage of Jesus because He didn't hide from the authorities. John 11:57 makes it clear that there was a price on Jesus' head and the authorities were looking for Him. Despite that threat, Jesus came into Jerusalem in the most public way possible.*

9. **Reflection:** How can we welcome Jesus as King in our own lives today?

- *By surrendering our hearts and submitting to His rule as King of our lives.*
- *By trusting His authority rather than our own plans.*
- *By living with humility, obedience, and gratitude. WWJD.*
- *Through daily worship, Bible study, evangelism, prayer, and aligning our values with His kingdom priorities.*

10. **Reflection:** What does Jesus' humility teach us about the kind of King He is?
- *He is a servant-King, not a self-seeking ruler. He came to serve, not to be served and to give His life as ransom for many (Mark 10:45)*
  - *His power is shown through gentleness, mercy, and sacrifice.*
  - *He leads by love, not by domineering. And His love is always sacrificial.*
  - *His humility invites us to follow in the same spirit, valuing service over status.*

### Read Mark 11:12-25

11. What did Jesus find when He went to look for fruit on the fig tree? (vv12–13)  
*Jesus was hungry and went to a **fig tree in leaf**, expecting to find fruit because the leaves suggested fruit. However, when He looked, **He found nothing but leaves**, because it was not the season for figs.*

12. Why did Jesus curse the tree, and what might it symbolize? (verse 14)

*Jesus said, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again."*

*This was not about punishing a literal tree—it was a **symbolic act**.*

*The **fig tree often represents Israel** (see Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 8:13).*

*The tree's **leaves suggested fruitfulness**, but it was **barren**—a picture of Israel's **religious appearance without spiritual reality**.*

*It symbolized **Israel's outward religion** (especially seen in the temple and in the Pharisees) that lacked genuine faith and righteousness.*

*In the region around Jerusalem:*

- ***Early "breba" figs** (small, edible buds) often appear **before** the full crop of leaves.*
- *These early figs can appear **in spring**, while the **main fig harvest** comes in **late summer or autumn**.*
- *So if a tree had **leaves**, it should also have had some of these **early figs** — a **sign of future fruitfulness**.*

***Therefore, the presence of leaves created a legitimate expectation that some edible fruit (or early buds) should be found.***

13. What was happening in the temple courts when Jesus arrived? (verse 15)

When Jesus entered the temple, He found people:

- **Buying and selling animals** for sacrifices,
- **Money changers** exchanging foreign currency for temple coins, often at unfair rates. Basically, ripping people off!

The **outer court**, which was meant for worship and prayer (especially for the Gentiles – non-Jews), had become a **marketplace**.

14. How did Jesus respond to what He saw? Why? (verses 15–16)

Jesus was very angry (righteous anger). Jesus **drove out** those buying and selling; He **overturned** the tables of money changers and dove sellers and **stopped anyone carrying goods** through the temple courts.

He did this because the temple—meant to be **“a house of prayer”**—had become a place of **greed and exploitation** – as He called it **“a den of robbers”**

His actions were a **prophetic judgment** against corruption and spiritual hypocrisy – prophesied in Jeremiah 7:11.

15. What was Jesus’ point in quoting Isaiah 56:7 & Jeremiah 7:11? (verse 17)

Isaiah 56:7 – **“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”**

Jesus reminded them [quoting Isaiah] that God’s temple was meant for worship/prayer and for inclusion, even the Gentiles; God’s temple was not meant not profiteering or exclusion.

Jeremiah 7:11 – **“Has this house... become a den of robbers to you?”**

Jesus accused them of turning a place of worship into a hideout for thieves, where corrupt people thought they could take refuge behind religious appearances.

**By quoting both, Jesus declared that the temple system had failed its true purpose.**

**Every Jewish male had to pay a yearly temple tax — an amount equaling about two days’ pay. It had to be paid in the currency of the temple, and the money exchangers made the exchange into temple money at outrageous rates.**

16. What reaction did the religious leaders have to Jesus’ actions? (verse 18)

*The chief priests and teachers of the law were furious.*

*They began looking for a way to kill Jesus, because they feared Him because of His popularity as the crowd was amazed at His teaching. Also Jesus' moral authority exposed their corruption and hypocrisy. **The chief priests and teachers of the law could see their status and position in society slipping away, as Jesus' teaching, authority and popularity were far superior to theirs!***

17. What does Jesus teach about faith, prayer, and forgiveness in verses 22–25?

*Jesus tells the disciples:*

- **“Have faith in God.” (v22)**
- *He says: faith can accomplish what seems impossible—and He uses the example of moving of a mountain!*
- *Prayer must be offered with **believing hearts and without doubting**, trusting in God's power to move mountains and do the impossible.*
- *Forgiveness is essential—when we pray, we must forgive others so that our own relationship with God remains right. If we hold a grudge or an unforgiving heart against people, Jesus says we must “forgive them” not we should!*

***True faith expresses itself in trust, prayer, and forgiveness—the kind of spiritual fruit that was totally missing in the fig tree and temple.***

*i. “The phrase about removing mountains was a quite common Jewish phrase. It was a regular, vivid phrase for removing difficulties.” (Barclay)*

*ii. This promise of God's answer to the prayer made in faith was made to disciples, not to the multitude. “Nor should we interpret Mark 11:24 to mean, ‘If you pray hard enough and really believe, God is obligated to answer your prayer no matter what you ask.’ That kind of faith is not faith in God; rather it is nothing but faith in faith, or faith in feelings.” (Wiersbe)*

18. **Reflection:** How might this passage challenge us about having a faith that bears fruit?

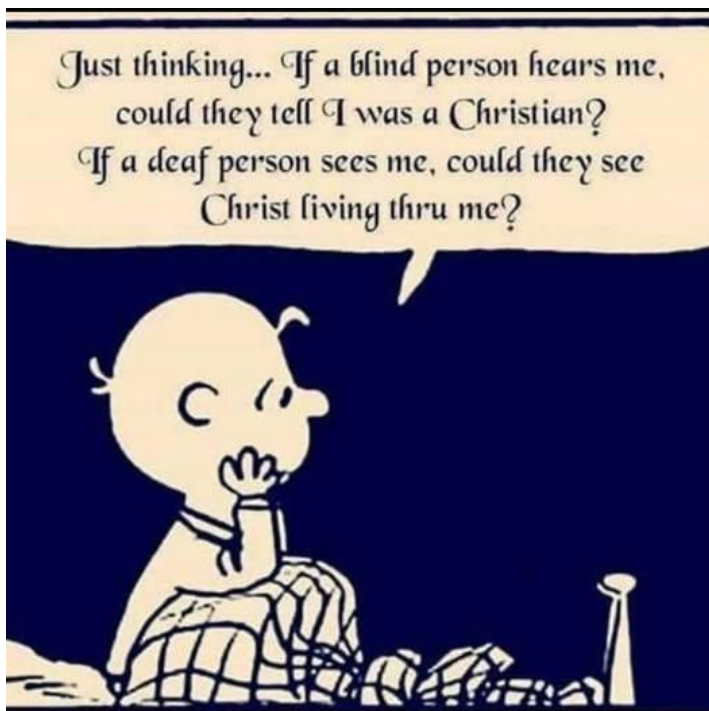
*This passage warns against **empty religion**—appearing faithful but lacking genuine faith, devotion and/or compassion.*

*It calls us to examine our lives:*



- Do our **actions** reflect our faith?
- Do people see **the fruit of the spirit** as we live out our faith?
- Does our **faith bring glory to God**?
- Are we **producing fruit** of love, justice, generosity, and prayerfulness?
- Are our hearts a true **“house of prayer”**, or do distractions and our selfish motives taken over?

*Jesus desires a **living, fruitful faith**, not just outward religiosity.*



### **Read Mark 11:27-33**

19. Why did the religious leaders and elders question Jesus’ authority?  
*Jesus had just **cleansed the temple** (vv. 15–17) and was **teaching there** with remarkable authority.*

*The **chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders**—the official guardians of religious authority—were jealous of Jesus and feeling insecure in their position and felt threatened by Jesus – so they **challenged His right or authority** to act as He just did. They asked, “By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?”*

*Their motive was not genuine curiosity but a **desire to trap or discredit** Jesus in front of the people!*

20. How did Jesus respond to their question and why does He mention John's baptism?

*Instead of answering directly, Jesus answers their question with His own **counter-question [I love it when Jesus does that!]:***

*"John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?"*

*By doing this, Jesus:*

- *Exposed their **spiritual blindness and dishonesty.***
- *Jesus also linked His own ministry with **John the Baptist**, who had testified that Jesus was the **Messiah** (Mark 1:7–8).*
- *And Jesus forced them to confront the question of **divine authority versus human authority**—if they rejected John's divine commission, they would also reject Jesus'. If they accepted John's divine commission, they must accept His too!*

21. What dilemma did this question create for the religious leaders? (verses 31–32)

*As they **discussed Jesus' reply amongst themselves**, they realised they were trapped:*

- *If they said John's Baptism was "**from heaven**," Jesus would ask, "Then why didn't you believe John?"*
- *If they said John's Baptism was "**of human origin**," then they feared the crowd, who believed John was a true prophet from God.*

*They were caught between **losing credibility with the people or condemning themselves** for unbelief. They were in no win situation!*

22. How does their response in verse 33 reveal their hypocrisy?

*By answering Jesus with the reply "We don't know", they were deliberately evading His question when they **knew the truth but refused to acknowledge it** because it threatened their position and pride.*

*Their refusal to take a stand showed they cared more about **public opinion and power** than about the **truth from God** and about **obedience to God**.*

23. **Reflection:** What does this passage teach us about true authority?

- *True authority comes from God, not from human titles, institutions, or people approval.*
- *Jesus' authority was inherent, rooted in His relationship with His Heavenly Father.*
- *Those who are spiritually proud often resist God's authority because it exposes their motives.*

*For us, this passage challenges us to submit humbly to Jesus' authority, to speak truth courageously, and to ensure our faith is grounded in God's will, not human recognition or people pleasing or people approval.*

What's the **BIG IDEA** of **Mark 11:1-33**

**Jesus enters Jerusalem as the true King and exercises divine authority—calling for genuine, fruitful faith instead of empty religion**

**OR**

**Our Faith needs to be fair dinkum!**



**What light globe moment did you have?**

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**V22 - "Have faith in God," Jesus answered**

**Finish in prayer:** Dear Jesus thank You that You are the true King who came in humility and grace. You deserve our praise, our trust, and our obedience. Forgive us for the times our faith has been fruitless or our worship hollow. Cleanse our hearts as You cleansed the temple and help us to live with sincere faith that honours You in all we do. Please teach us to bear fruit that pleases You, to pray with believing hearts, and to submit joyfully to Your authority. May our lives proclaim, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord", In Jesus Name, Amen.

### Study 3 – Whose Authority will you honour?

Mark 12:1-17

*(Sermon on 16<sup>th</sup> November)*

#### Read Mark 12:1-12

1. What familiar image does Jesus use to describe God's relationship with His people in verse 1? (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7)

*In verse 1, Jesus uses the familiar image of a **vineyard** to describe God's relationship with His people.*

*This is the same as Isaiah 5:1–7, where Israel is portrayed as God's vineyard — lovingly planted, protected, and expected to bear good fruit. Just as the vineyard owner in Isaiah cared for his vineyard but found only bad fruit, so in Jesus' parable, God lovingly entrusted His people (the vineyard) to leaders who were meant to care for them, yet they rejected His messengers and ultimately rejected and killed His Son.*

2. In the parable: Who/What is the vineyard? Who is the man/owner who planted the vineyard? Who are the tenants? Who are the servants? Who is the son?

#### **Vineyard**

*Represents **Israel, God's chosen people** — those He lovingly planted, protected, and expected to bear fruit (cf. Isaiah 5:1–7).*

#### **Man / Owner**

*Represents **God the Father**, the one who established His people, gave them all they needed to flourish, and rightfully expects fruit (faith, justice, and obedience).*

*Note: the generosity of God – He equipped the vineyard for success.*

*Note: the trust of God – The owner went away and left the tenants to run the vineyard.*

*Note: the patience of God – Many times the owner/master gave the tenants a chance to pay the debt they owed. Patience they little deserved!*

#### **Tenants**

*Represent the **religious leaders of Israel** — the priests, scribes, and elders — who were entrusted with spiritual care of God's people but acted selfishly and faithlessly.*

### **Servants**

Represent the **prophets** God sent throughout Israel's history — men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others — who were often rejected, mistreated, or killed for calling the people back to faithfulness.

### **Son**

Represents **Jesus Christ, the Son of God** — sent as the final and beloved messenger, whom the tenants (the leaders) reject and kill, pointing to Jesus' coming crucifixion.

### **The Others**

Represents those who respond faithfully to Jesus' death and resurrection. Both Jews/Gentiles who believe. This represents the universal **church!**

#### 3. What's wrong with the tenants thinking in verse 7?

*They forget who truly owns the vineyard. They act as though they can take possession of what belongs to God, ignoring His authority and rightful ownership.*

*They believe they can remove the owner's claim by killing his son. This is both foolish and rebellious — they think that rejecting or destroying the Son will give them control, when in truth it brings judgment.*

*It reveals hearts of pride and self-interest.*

*The tenants want the benefits of the vineyard without relationship or obedience to the owner, just as the religious leaders wanted to keep their power and position without submitting to God's Son.*

#### 4. How do the actions of the tenants relate to Jesus?

- The tenants **rejected the owner's authority** just like the religious leaders rejected Jesus' authority
- The tenants **mistreated the messengers** — just like Israel had rejected the prophets who were sent to call people back to God and prophesy the coming of Jesus the Messiah

- The tenants **killed the Son** – just like the religious leaders will do – when Jesus is arrested, condemned and crucified
- The tenants **didn't produced fruit** in the vineyard (as in Isaiah's time too) – and this is what Jesus was talking about in Mark chapter 11

**The Son was the final messenger. There would be no other. Either they would accept the message of the Son or face certain judgment. "If you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. He is God's ultimatum. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent; heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ be rejected, hope is rejected." (Spurgeon)**

5. How does the vineyard owner's response show both patience and justice?

The owner acts with **patience** by sending messenger after messenger, even after they are beaten and killed. Instead of responding in anger immediately, he gives the tenants many chances to do what is right. Likewise, God was patient with Israel, sending prophet after prophet, to call people back to him and show mercy and long suffering towards their rebellion.

2 Peter 3:9 - "The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

When the tenants finally kill the owner's son, the owner acts decisively — he **implements justice and judgment** and gives the vineyard to others who will be faithful.

This reveals that while God is patient, He will not overlook sin forever.

His justice ensures that evil and rejection of His Son are not left unpunished forever.

6. What is the meaning of the quotation from Psalm 118:22–23 in verses 10–11?

Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22–23: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

The **stone** the builders reject refers to **Jesus**

The **builders** are **the religious leaders of Israel**

*Jesus is often likened unto a stone or a rock in the Bible. He is the rock of provision that followed Israel in the desert (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is the stone of stumbling (1 Peter 2:8). He is the stone cut without hands that crushes the kingdoms of this world (Daniel 2:45). He is the cornerstone which is the key stone for building upon; we must build our lives on the rock-solid foundation of Jesus, the cornerstone! In Matthew 16:16-17: Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven and I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.. Jesus meant that the church would be built on the rock-solid foundation of Peter's confession that 'Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God'*

*Peter, by His own testimony, did not see himself as the rock on which the church was founded. He wrote that we are living stones, but Jesus is the cornerstone. We could say that Peter was the "first believer"; that he was the "first rock" among "many rocks."*

*Peter went on to say in 1 Peter 2:4-5 - Coming to Him [Jesus] as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

7. Why did the religious leaders react the way they did? (verse 12)?

*It was pretty obvious the parable was about them. They realized that in the parable Jesus was exposing them as 'wicked tenants' who had rejected God's messengers and would ultimately kill God's Son.*

*They were angry and wanted to silence Jesus. Often when people haven't got a defence to the truth – they want to silence and/harm a person physically or psychologically or emotionally. This happened recently with **Charlie Kirk** (American evangelist) who was silenced permanently for teaching Jesus' truth!*

*The religious leaders wanted to **get rid of Jesus** — to protect their power and reputation — just as the tenants killed the son in the parable. Also, Jesus was so popular with the people, the religious leaders feared that a huge backlash, if they acted 'openly' against Jesus.*

*The last straw for the religious leaders was that Jesus says in verse 9 –“ He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to **others!**” Those others – meant not Israel! This, the religious leaders could not stomach!*

8. **Reflection:** How might we today be tempted to reject Jesus’ authority in our own “vineyard”?

- *We could think we own the vineyard ourselves; not God. We might forget that everything we have – our time, our talents, family, friends, work, possessions, even our ministry – all belong to God – and we are simply His stewards.*
- *We might resist God’s Word – especially when it challenges us to ‘change’ or ‘repent’*
- *We might seek to control everything ourselves – and we resist Jesus being King and Lord of our lives – all our plans, ambitions, relationships, possessions and finance are under His control; not ours.*
- *We withhold the spiritual fruit He wants to see or we stop producing spiritual fruit.*
- *We ignore the Great Commission – we remain silent about our faith – when we are meant to share it*

9. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 12:1-12**?

### **Isaiah 5:1–7**

#### ***Isaiah 5:1–7 is the Song of the Vineyard***

- *In Isaiah, **God is the owner** of a vineyard (Israel) that He planted and cared for with love and expectation.*
- *But instead of producing good fruit (justice and righteousness), it yielded only bad fruit (violence and injustice).*
- *As a result, God removes its protection and allows judgment to fall.*

**Connection:** *Jesus deliberately uses the same imagery as Isaiah— His parable is like a **continuation of Isaiah’s story.***

*The vineyard is still Israel, but now the focus is on the **leaders** (the tenants) who have failed to produce fruit and rejected God’s messengers.*



## Psalm 118:22–23

### *Psalm 118:22–23 is about the Rejected Stone*

- *This psalm celebrates God’s deliverance and victory, declaring that the **stone the builders rejected** has become the **cornerstone**.*
- ***What other people deemed worthless, God has made essential.***

***Connection:** Jesus quotes this psalm to show that He is the rejected stone — refused by Israel’s leaders but chosen and exalted by God as the foundation of His kingdom. It’s a prophecy of both rejection and resurrection, highlighting God’s marvellous reversal.*

## Jeremiah 7:25–26

### *Jeremiah 7:25–26 – Rejection of the Prophets*

- *God laments that, from the time He brought Israel out of Egypt, He has sent prophets “day after day,” but the people “did not listen or pay attention; they stiffened their necks.”*

***Connection:** This mirrors the servants sent to the tenants in Jesus’ parable — one after another, they were rejected, beaten, or killed. It reveals the long history of Israel’s resistance to God’s word and points to their final rejection of His Son.*

## Read Mark 12:13-17

10. What was the motive of the Pharisees and Herodians? Why is it surprising that these two groups are working together?

*Their motive was to **trap Jesus in His words** (v.13) — to make Him say something that could be used against Him politically or religiously.*

*It’s surprising because the **Pharisees** and **Herodians** were normally **enemies**:*

- *The **Pharisees** opposed Roman rule and wanted Israel’s independence.*
- *The **Herodians** supported Rome and the rule of Herod, Rome’s puppet king.*

*Yet they **joined forces** out of a shared hostility toward Jesus, whose growing influence threatened both their authority and power.*

*The Pharisees and Herodians came using flattery “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth”*

*Jesus knew enough to not regard this flattery from His enemies. Sometimes our enemies flatter us because they want to hurt us. Sometimes our friends flatter us because they want to be kind and helpful. Either way, it is a mistake to put too much stock in what others say about us, either good or bad.*

*i. Charles Spurgeon said to pastors, “It is always best not to know, nor wish to know, what is being said about you, either by friends or foes. Those who praise us are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse us.”*

*ii. “Here is a fair glove drawn upon a foul hand... There are those who will smile in your face, and at the same time cut your throat.” (Trapp)*

11. What question did they pose to Jesus?

*“Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” (v.14–15)*

*They were forcing Jesus to take a side — either against Rome (which could get Him arrested) or against the Jewish people (which would make Him unpopular).*

*Since the year 6 A.D. the Jews were forced to pay taxes directly into the emperor’s treasury. Some Jewish patriots (like the Zealots) refused to pay this tax because they did not want to recognize Roman rule as legitimate. Most people grudgingly paid it, but everybody hated it. It wasn’t just the money, but also the principle of paying the Roman oppressor.*

*i. Three taxes were imposed by the Romans on Judea. The first was the ground tax, which was 10% of all grain and 20% of all wine and fruit. The second was the income tax, which amounted to 1% of a man’s income. The third was the poll tax, paid by men aged 12 to 65 and women 14 to 65. This was one denarius a year, about a day’s wage for a labourer.*

12. Why would this question have been politically dangerous for Jesus to answer with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’?

*If Jesus said “Yes, pay the tax,” the people would see Him as disloyal to Israel and siding with their Roman oppressors.*

*If He said “No,” He could be accused of rebellion against Rome — a charge punishable by death.*

*It was a clever trap: either answer could destroy His ministry or His life.*

*But remember, Jesus is very smart!*

13. What is significant about Jesus asking to see a denarius and what hypocrisy does the fact that they have this coin in their possession, expose? (verse 15–16)

*The denarius was a Roman coin used to pay the tax. It bore Caesar’s image and inscription, declaring him “divine.”*

*By asking for the coin, Jesus **exposes their hypocrisy:***

*They actually carry and use Caesar’s money, benefiting from the Roman system, yet they pretend to object to Caesar’s authority.*

*They already live under Rome’s rule and depend on its economy — their protest is hollow, hypocritical and self-serving.*

*Note: The denarius coin had the image of Tiberius the reigning Roman Emperor. The inscription: “Tiberius, the divine Augustus” and on the reverse “pontifex maximus” — the high-priest of the Roman nation”*

*The coin was a sign of power. In the Ancient World, when an invasion happened — the first thing the invader did was to issue their own coinage.*

*The area of power was measured by the extent of the emperor’s coins being valid currency!*

*By bearing his image, the emperor technically owned the coins. Hence Jesus’ rely ‘give to Caesar what is Caesar’s!’*

14. What does Jesus mean by, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s”? (verse 17)

*Jesus is saying: fulfil your responsibilities in both realms — both the earthly and the divine.*

*Caesar’s image is on the coin → therefore, it belongs to Caesar.*

*God's image is on us as human beings (Genesis 1:27) → therefore we belong to God. Pay taxes and honour earthly authorities, but give ultimate allegiance, worship, and obedience to God alone.*

*As Jesus held the coin, He knew the government of Caesar would soon pierce His hand and crucify Him. Yet He still said, "pay your taxes to the Roman government."*

15. **Ponder:** Why is Jesus' response so amazing?

*Jesus avoids the trap completely while exposing their hypocrisy.*

*Jesus affirms civic duty without compromising spiritual devotion.*

*It shows Jesus' divine wisdom and authority — He discerns motives and answers with truth that transcends politics.*

*Jesus' words remain timeless — a perfect balance between faithfulness to God and respect for earthly authorities.*

*They were amazed but they did not change. In fact, they twisted Jesus' wise answer into a lying accusation against Him. In Luke 23:2, they accused Jesus of forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar — when He actually said just the opposite!*

*Sometimes it doesn't matter how good an answer you give; some people will still twist your good words. They did this to Jesus, yet God's truth prevailed. In the answer of Jesus, God was glorified, Caesar was satisfied, the people were edified, and His critics were stunned.*

16. **Reflection:** What does it mean for us today to "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's"?

*It means **living responsibly in both worlds**:*

- *Respecting laws, paying taxes, and contributing to society.*
- *But remembering that our **ultimate loyalty is to God**, not any government or earthly power.*

*We can serve faithfully in our nation but never let political or national identity replace our identity as God's people.*

*If the government authorities tell us to do something which contradicts God's Word, we are not obliged to obey; we obey God!*

17. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 12:13-17**?

**Genesis 1:27 - So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them**

*The **denarius** bore **Caesar's image**, meaning it belonged to Caesar.*

***We bear God's image**, we are God's image-bearers; meaning we belong to God. Jesus' point is that while the coin rightly goes to Caesar, **our lives, loyalty, and worship belong to God alone.***

*This verse deepens the contrast between temporary earthly rule and eternal divine ownership.*

**Daniel 2:20-21 - "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others."**

*This reminds us that **God is the ultimate ruler** behind every earthly government. Caesar's authority — and any government's power — exists only because **God allows it.***

*Jesus is teaching the truth that: we can give what is due to human rulers **without any fear**, because **God's sovereignty stands above everything.***

*There is a lot of security in Daniel's statement and Jesus' complementary teaching.*

**Deuteronomy 10:14 - "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it."**

*Even though Jesus distinguishes between Caesar's realm and God's realm, this verse from Deuteronomy 10:14 reminds us that ultimately, **everything belongs to God.***

*Paying taxes doesn't mean dividing our loyalties — rather, we acknowledge that all earthly things are under God's rule.*

*It also keeps our perspective right: **Caesar may own the coin, but God owns the world.***

What's the **BIG IDEA** of Mark 12:1-17

**God/Jesus' authority is above ALL human power/authority**



**What light globe moment did you have?**

What **questions** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**V17 - Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.**

**Finish in prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, as the cornerstone of our faith. Forgive us for the times we have rejected Your authority or sought our own way. Help us to honour You in every part of our lives — with our hearts, our worship, and our resources. Teach us to give to You what rightly belongs to You and to live faithfully in Your vineyard, bearing fruit that brings glory to Your name. May our lives reflect obedience, gratitude, and unwavering allegiance to You. In Jesus Name, we pray. Amen.

**Study 4 – The God Who Gives Life and Calls for Love****Mark 12:18-34*****(Sermon on 23<sup>rd</sup> November)*****Read Mark 12:18-27**

1. Who are the Sadducees? Do some research on what they do and don't believe.
2. Why did the Sadducees pose this question about marriage in the resurrection?
3. What does Jesus' answer reveal about their understand of scripture?
4. Why does Jesus quote Exodus 3:6? What point is He making? (verse 26)?
5. How does Jesus' answer show that God is the God of the living, not the dead?
6. **Reflection:** How does this challenge modern doubts about eternal life?
7. **Reflection:** How should belief in the resurrection shape the way we live today??

8. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 12:18-27**?

**Exodus 3:1-6**

**Deuteronomy 25:5–10**

**Daniel 12:1-3**

**Read Mark 12:28-34**

9. Who asks Jesus which commandment is the most important? (verse 28)?

10. How does Jesus summarize the greatest commandment? (verses 29–30)?

11. What is the connection between loving God and keeping His commandments? (verse 30)?

12. How does the second commandment complement the first? (verse 31)

13. Look up the 10 commandments; how do they relate to Jesus' summary of just two commandments?



14. What's impressive about the teacher of the law's response? How does Jesus commend him?
15. **Reflection:** How does understanding these two commandments help us live faithfully in God's kingdom?
16. How do the following Old Testament passages relate to **Mark 12:28-34**?

**Deuteronomy 6:4-8**

**Leviticus 19:18**

**Psalm 18:1**

**Psalm 31:23**

What's the ***BIG IDEA*** of **Mark 12:18-34**



**What light globe moment did you have?**

What ***questions*** do you have about the passages in this study?

**Share the verse** that had a special meaning to you in this study?

**Finish in prayer:** Father God, we thank You that You are the God of the living, who gives hope beyond death and calls us into a life of love and obedience. Forgive us for the times we have doubted Your power or neglected to love You with all our hearts. Teach us to love You fully and to love our neighbours as ourselves, living faithfully in Your vineyard each day. Open our eyes to Your truth, strengthen our faith, and help us reflect Your love in every relationship and action. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

**Studies prepared by Paul O'Rourke**  
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**Resources:**

The MacArthur Study Bible  
New Bible Commentary (Carson, France, Moyter & Wenham)  
The Gospel of Mark (William Barclay)  
The Gospel of St. Mark Commentary by C.E.B. Cranfield  
Preaching Mark by Phil Crowter  
The Gospel of Mark by Ben Witherington III  
Matthew Henry's Commentary