



FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH LENT

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Lent 2012

WELCOME to our series of Lent Home-groups.

If you've been part of a home-group before, you'll find something different this Lent. As a church we are reading Mark's gospel this Lent, and our home-groups will be a chance to share what you have been learning. (Do make sure you've got a copy of our 'Big Bible Challenge' reading plan).

So as you read Mark's gospel, do make a note of things which have excited you, encouraged you, surprised you, confused you. Then at home-group, be ready to share these with the others there. Maybe if there has been something that has confused you, another member of the group will be able to help. Maybe something which has encouraged you will also encourage someone else.

There are also some questions to talk about in the group, and each session finishes with a reflection and some questions to think about yourself.

There is more material available on the internet, at <http://bigbible.org.uk/big-read/bigread12/>, including sound files of each of the reflections.

These studies run weekly through Lent. Although our home-groups don't usually meet during school holidays, there is an optional 6th study for those who want to use it.

WEEK 1. PREPARATION

NIBBLES

When you have a special event to get ready for, do you prepare well in advance, or are you a 'last minute rush' person?

STARTER

Psalm 24 is an invitation to prepare ourselves to welcome the Lord. Use this psalm together, then pray that God will help you to be ready to welcome him into your life afresh this Lent.

MAIN COURSE

Over the first few days of our Lent readings, Mark has begun to show us who Jesus is. We've seen him calling others to follow him, we've seen him driving out an evil spirit, we've seen him healing and forgiving, and we've seen him going off to pray.

- Have you discovered anything new about Jesus from the first 2 chapters of Mark?
- What most impresses you about Jesus in these chapters?

READ MARK 1:1-20

- How does John's ministry prepare the way for Jesus?

Malachi wrote more than 400 years before the coming of Jesus, and Isaiah wrote almost 400 years before Malachi.

- Does it make any difference knowing that the good news is so deeply rooted in history?
- Despite his greatness, Jesus came to John for baptism. What does this tell us about Jesus' relationship to us?
- How does knowing that Jesus faced temptation encourage you when you are facing temptations?

READ MARK 2:1-17

- What do you think is most significant about Jesus saying to the man let down through the roof 'son, your sins are forgiven'?
- Why did the Pharisees disapprove of the people Jesus met with?
- In reply to the Pharisees, Jesus tells them that he is like a doctor. How has he shown that throughout this first section of Mark?

DESSERT

Reflection: John Pantry (Premier Radio): Finding The Missing Peace

In the history of the world who was the greatest person who ever lived? Many would select Mary as the girl chosen to bear the Son of God – she must have been extraordinary. Of the men then surely Moses who led the nation of Israel out of Egyptian slavery or the great miracle working prophet Elijah, or maybe the multi-skilled David – warrior, poet and King, he must be on God’s short list? Perhaps so but it is John the Baptist who takes the crown. Who says so – well none other than Jesus Himself.

“Among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11) Jesus goes on to describe him as a prophet like Elijah, a herald announcing the greatest news that the world would ever hear – a Saviour has come.

The story of the remarkable circumstances of John’s birth is recorded in detail in Luke’s Gospel and his appearance in the world is one that touches the hearts of every barren wife and every childless husband. God not only graciously answered the prayers of Zechariah and Elizabeth for a son but responded to the cries of the oppressed and lost people of Israel. John was called to prepare the way for the coming of a Saviour. However, unlike the morning stars that heralded creation or the heavenly choir that announced Jesus birth to the shepherds, John’s life was not obviously melodic or beautiful in the world’s eyes.

Of his early years we know nothing but then he emerges as this strange, desert dwelling, monk-like figure wearing animal skins and surviving on a bush-tucker diet of locusts and wild honey, burning with the message that the Jews had been waiting to hear. Calling people to repentance in preparation, he announced that a Saviour

was coming. He must increase and I must decrease said John and so it was that as his work ended, Jesus ministry burst into bloom.

John lived simply and died brutally and his lifestyle was the very opposite of many of us in the West today. Our lives are full of busyness and things. The older we get, often the busier we get and the more things we accumulate. Advertisers encourage us to consume and treat ourselves – “because you’re worth it”. That part is true, each one of us is of incalculable worth to God, we are precious and loved. But our response to the knowledge of that love should not be to comfort ourselves with things or act as if our value comes from our achievements and our status but rather put our trust, belief and hope in the One who created us, loves us and died to save us.

The greatest man who ever lived showed us that there are far more important things than treasured possessions, tailored clothes and fine food. As we prepare for Lent we should ask ourselves: have we got our priorities today completely out of order? Are we clear as to why each of us is here in the world? Should we be taking more time to discover the part we should play in God’s perfect jigsaw puzzle?

Is there a missing piece or even peace where our lives and gifts should be?

TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Am I giving others a heavier burden because I’m not fulfilling the role God has called me to?
2. Should I be taking time to discover what my gifts are and how they fit into the picture of my local church?
3. If I’m keeping close to God, are the desires of my heart what He wants for me?
4. Is it ever too late to step into the role to which God has called me?
5. Is the discontent that so many people feel about their lives, the result of not playing the part that we were destined for?

2. ECHOES

NIBBLES

Where is the best place you have ever been? Would you like to go back, or do you fear it might not be as good if you went again?

STARTER

Use either words from the Bible, from a song, or your own words to praise God for what he has done for you in the past.

MAIN COURSE

As you've continued reading through Mark's gospel, you will have read of Jesus once again performing miracles, of him teaching in parables, and of him again being challenged by the Pharisees.

- Has anything that you've read this week encouraged or challenged you?

- Has anything helped you to understand more about who Jesus is?

READ MARK 2:18-3:35

- What things are Jesus and his disciples criticised for?

How are Jesus' and the Pharisees attitudes to the Sabbath different?

How does what Jesus says in v.27-28 challenge both too rigid and too soft a view of the Sabbath?

- When we are opposed or rejected by those who are closest to us, what comfort can we find in Jesus' words in verses 33-35

READ MARK 4:1-34

- Jesus explained his use of parables by quoting from Isaiah 6. Does looking back at that passage help us to understand what Jesus says here?
- What is the secret of the Kingdom (v.11)

READ MARK 4:35-41

- Why are the disciples still afraid after Jesus has calmed the storm?

Look at Psalm 65:7, 89:9, 107:29.

- What echoes of these psalms do you find in Jesus stilling the storm.

What does that tell you about how he was able to do it?

DESSERT

Reflection: Brian Draper (Echosounder) 'Our Calm within the Storm'

I don't know what's more impressive: Jesus calming the storm, or him simply being able to sleep through it, on the deck of a small boat, upon Lake Galilee. I've never been able to doze in a car or train, let alone on a boat in a storm. But there's Jesus, dead to the world, within the maelstrom.

Perhaps he was too exhausted to worry. Having given so much of himself to the crowds and his disciples, he could have been forgiven, after all, for being spent.

But sometimes I wonder, in this story, whether he isn't simply showing disregard for what's happening on the surface of things.

My own response, when life's waters grow turbulent, is, like the disciples, to panic. Circumstances can make the best of us flap like a fish. With Jesus, however, the opposite seems to happen: his deeply anchored presence calms even the waves; an un-rippling effect from the centre out.

The story reminds me of another scene in which Jesus takes command, and which, above the water, again seems rough for his disciples. In fact, twice Jesus tells his fisher-followers to let down their nets – once at the start of his ministry, and once, after his resurrection – having fished all night, without joy. And both times, they land a record catch.

These days, fishing boats are fitted with an echosounder, which helps you to see what's below the surface. They help you spot the hidden dangers – the rocks and reefs – but also the treasure: the shoals of

fish. A signal sent below the surface bounces back as an echo, creating a picture of what's deeper down.

We're not very good at looking beyond the surface troubles of life. In fact, when things get stormy, we may even start to doubt our faith itself, and the doubter is 'like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind,' as James put it. Nevertheless, we follow the God who became one of us precisely to plumb the hidden depths of humanity: to reveal the rocks, like the echosounder, but also to show us the treasure.

At Lent, we follow him into the desert, where he did some echosounding for himself. He plumbed his own depths; listened for what lay beneath the surface of his own life, and emerged, after 40 days, with the clearest picture of who he was, and what he must do. Nothing at the surface level, however choppy it became, would now prevent him from being the person he'd been put on Earth to be.

Look where it got him, they said later, as he hung on the Cross.

It got him all the way to us. The presence of the man in the boat reaches to us here, as deep now calls to deep once more. His Spirit dives and drives beneath our surface, and sends its signal back up. Here is treasure, for those who believe it. Here, too, our calm within the storm.

TO THINK ABOUT:

1. When have you felt the same as the disciples in this passage?
2. What echoes from the Old Testament do you see in Jesus' life?
3. What echoes from Jesus life do you see in your own?
4. Why did Jesus calm the storm? What impact does this have on us today?

3. EXPECTATIONS

NIBBLES

What are you most looking forwards to at the moment?

STARTER

Psalm 25 includes our theme verses for the year, about seeking God's way and putting our trust in his purposes for us. Use parts of this psalm to bring your prayers to the Lord. (You might like to sing / listen to Graham Kendrick's song 'To you O Lord.')

MAIN COURSE

This week we've seen Jesus' authority over evil spirits, over illness, over death, over nature. But we've also seen that faithfully serving the Lord doesn't guarantee an easy life – in fact for John the Baptist it was just the opposite.

- What has struck you most as you've read over the past week?
- Has anything you've read been a particular help to you?

READ MARK 5:21-43

- What does this passage tell you about Jesus' compassion?

- The woman was healed just by touching Jesus' clothes. Why did Jesus stop and make her admit what she had done.
- When Jesus has done something for us – maybe answered prayer or some other blessing, does it make any difference whether we tell others about it?

READ MARK 6:14-29

This flashback to the execution of John the Baptist interrupts the account of Jesus' sending out the Twelve to preach and heal.

- Why do you suppose Mark recounts it here?

READ MARK 6:30-44

- What differences can you see between Jesus' approach to the crowd and that of his disciples?
- Has tiredness ever blunted your desire to care for others?
- Jesus and Herod, the two kings in this passage, both serve banquets. What is different about them?

READ MARK 7:1-13

DESSERT

Reflection: Bridgitte Tetteh (Premier)

Last Christmas throughout the festive season I maintained a sea food diet (for those of you who don't know that's code for see food and eat it) the result, well, several items of my clothing had become rather snug. My worst fears were also confirmed when I stood on the bathroom scales. As the numbers appeared on the screen all I could think of was an old Caribbean rhyme a friend used to sing. 'Big belly, skinny legs, Adrian walk like an Easter egg!').

As it happens, fictional Adrian and I shared a larger midriff. P.S. Did I just catch you looking at your own stomach...there's no shame it you know. (Sorry I digress, it's a terrible habit). Anyhow back to the matter in hand, I decided to take action and sought advice from a fitness instructor, who assured me that by lurching into action in true James Bond style and following a set of rules, I will become healthier and in-turn develop the sought after surfboard stomach.

Rule number 1: no cakes, sweets, crisps or any other sweet snacking.

Rule number 2: nothing deep fried, buttered or battered.

Rule number 3: a minimum of 30 minutes exercise each day.

By the time we got to rule number 10, I must admit I had lost the will to live but my expectations were high and I decided to stick to it. However a month into my new routine, my regime had become all consuming. I spent hours and hours each week devoted to becoming body beautiful. My friends were not happy, they never saw me. My family were unhappy; I had become the dinner guest from hell. I had also become so tired my nightly prayers became an evening snooze. I feared my quest for improved health was slowly becoming a slavish pursuit of vanity. Had I lost sight of my original goal? Achieving better health and honouring the body that God had given me? Jesus

says in the passage we read today 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' I wonder what in your life is preventing you from having a deeper spiritual life? Have you created rules and regulations which have taken you away from church, family or God? One quick story before I go...I once visited a church, walked in and found a seat (as you do) sat down, only to be told by a member of the congregation that I was sitting in Sister Heather's seat! I had broken an unspoken rule and felt uncomfortable for the rest of the service, I never forgot that encounter, which is food for thought for us all.

Have you mortgaged your front pew? Or more seriously, are there human traditions you are holding on to, which have no Biblical basis? I encourage you to read further on in the chapter in verse 8 where there's more Biblical wisdom to feast on.

P.S. Talking food.... in case you're interested after adjusting the rules, I did manage to achieve my health goals in a balanced way and am now the proud owner of semi-flat stomach (well you can't have it all!).

TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What rules do you live by?
2. How can living by rules draw us nearer to God?
3. In what ways is it important for Christians to be set apart?
4. Which do you prefer: the gospel or grace or the gospel of law, and why?
5. What's the most important thing in this passage?

4. CHALLENGES

NIBBLES

Do you enjoy a challenge, or would you rather have a quiet life?

STARTER

Philippians 2:5-11 is a great hymn of praise to Jesus. Either read it together, or put what it says into your own words of praise.

MAIN COURSE

“Who do you say I am?” The whole of Mark’s gospel so far has been set out to help us answer this question. It is a question that Jesus asks each of us, and the answer we give ultimately determines our destiny. But our answer involves more than what we say with our lips; it also involves the way we live our lives.

- Have you learned anything new about who Jesus is so far this Lent?
- Has what you have learned so far changed how you live?

READ MARK 8:1-21

- Why do you suppose the disciples, having recently seen the feeding of the 5,000, have such a hard time believing that Jesus can supply the needs of 4,000 here?
- Have there ever been times in your life when you have doubted that Jesus can help you, even though he has done so in the past?

- In verse 12, Jesus says that he will give no sign to this generation. Yet already he had performed many miracles, and later he would rise from death. So what do you think he meant?

READ MARK 8:22-9:1

- The healing of the blind man is the only time that Jesus healed someone in 2 stages. Why do you think he did it here?
- In response to Jesus’ question of who people are saying he is, the disciples tell him John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets. Why would people think that Jesus was any one of these?
- Right after Peter acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ, Jesus begins to explain what must happen to him. Why do think Peter reacts so strongly to what Jesus has said?
- Why does Jesus respond so harshly to Peter?
- How is Peter like the man in verses 22-26?

READ MARK 9:33-41

- What point was Jesus trying to make to his disciples?
- Why did Jesus liken welcoming a little child to welcoming him?

DESSERT

Reflection: Krish Kandiah (Evangelical Alliance): Will the real Jesus please stand up?

The gospel of Mark feels like a high-speed compilation of Jesus' "best bits" like the video clips you might see when someone has just won a reality TV competition. It has a stripped down fast-moving narrative, yet despite the break neck speed of this biography of Jesus, one question is repeated time after time – "Who is this Jesus?"

Despite being chronologically and geographically close to Jesus, many of Jesus' peers, friends and acquaintances, and enemies misunderstood him. Reading through Mark's gospel this Lent is an important opportunity to recalibrate our own thinking about who Jesus was and is. Listening closely to Mark's account will help us to make sure we get the true picture of Jesus. Strangely enough, the more clearly we see Jesus, the more clearly we understand who we are supposed to be.

Questions surrounding Jesus' identity pulse through the gospel of Mark. Why not skim through and discover this theme for yourself. The opening verses reveal that Jesus is the Messiah as foretold by the prophets (1:1-3). John the Baptist points to Jesus' identity by explaining to the expectant crowds his relationship to Jesus – a doorkeeper heralding the arrival of a VIP so powerful he was not even worthy to help him with his shoes. God himself identifies Jesus, declaring him to be his Son (1:11) at Jesus' baptism.

After these clear declarations of Jesus' credentials as God's son, the question of Jesus' identity suddenly becomes more intriguing. The astonished witnesses of Jesus' first exorcism don't know what to make of him, and Jesus is surprisingly cagey about his miracle working identity, asking them to keep it under wraps (1:44). The Pharisees can't resolve why the one who is supposed to be the anointed King wants to spend time with "sinners" and tax collectors. Even Jesus' own disciples can't work out why they get to relax and feast, compared to John's more ascetic followers.

Jesus explains to the Pharisees that he is like a doctor serving the sick (2:17), and to his disciples that he is like a bridegroom celebrating his wedding (3:18-32). But yet the questions keep reappearing. The evil spirits acknowledge who he is (3: 11-12), and the religious establishment think he is in league with the devil (3:22). Even his closest friends can't seem to get their heads around Jesus' identity: "Who is this guy?" they exclaim after he calms a fierce storm (4:41). The kids he grew up with don't recognise him when he returns to his home town (6:3). As Jesus' reputation spreads far and wide, his real identity becomes more and more mysterious.

As we reach chapter 8 of Mark's gospel, the question is going to be addressed once and for all. This time it is not the disciples, the demons, or the religious devotees asking the question – but Jesus himself. He turns to Peter, his most outspoken disciple and asks him straight out "Who do people say I am?" (8:27). Peter spits off the raft of common speculations: John the Baptist (they probably looked similar as they were cousins of a similar age with the same message) Elijah (the long awaited harbinger of the restoration as prophesied by Malachi in 450BC Malachi 4:5-6) or one of the other Old Testament prophets (reincarnated with their message of justice and repentance). But Jesus is not really interested in the tabloid theories. He wants Peter to make his own mind up: "Who do you say I am?"

Jesus went on to confound all the expectations of those waiting for the Messiah, conquering his enemies not through killing, but through being killed, proving his deity through the ultimate miracle – resurrection from the dead. Throughout the millennia, the crowds still discuss the controversial question of Jesus’ identity. If we accept that Jesus is who he says he is, the Messiah, Saviour of the world, rightful ruler and heir of the universe, then there are huge implications for how we live our lives. And so the question remains, the direct and personal question from Jesus to you: Who do you say that I am?

TO THINK ABOUT

1. What’s the most important characteristic of Jesus for you?
2. Why are the Pharisees arguing about Jesus’ identity?
3. What do you do in the name of Jesus? What shouldn’t be done in the name of Jesus?
4. In what ways does it work to challenge authority?

5. SIGNPOSTS

NIBBLES

- Have you ever got lost whilst on a journey?

STARTER

Psalm 119 reminds us of the wonder of God’s word, and encourages us to make the Bible the foundation of the whole of our life. Use Psalm 119:1-8 as your prayer.

MAIN COURSE

This week we’ve seen that knowing Jesus doesn’t just involve understanding who he is, it also should transform the way that we live.

- Is there anything you’ve read this week that has particularly challenged you?

- As we approach Palm Sunday, have you learned anything that will help you to be ready to welcome Jesus as your King?

READ MARK 10:13-31

Last time we saw Jesus use a child or children to illustrate a spiritual principle. Now he does it again.

- What does it mean to receive the kingdom like a little child?
- Why is it so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom?
- What obstacles were hardest for you to overcome in entering the kingdom?
- What does Jesus mean when he says that many who are first will be last, and the last first?

READ MARK 10:32-45

- How does James' and John's request show that they haven't understood what Jesus has been saying in verses 32-34?
- What does Jesus mean by the cup he is to drink and the baptism he is to be baptised with?
- How does verse 45 give us a motivation for service?

READ MARK 11:1-19

- Why is Jesus so angry with what is taking place in the temple?

DESSERT

Reflection: Katei Kirby (Methodist Church): Miracles in conversation

I recently went on a course for writers and spent the best part of a week with budding and experienced writers keen to improve their gift. To be honest, I was somewhat in awe of the esteemed company I was in, and spent the first part of the course pinching myself in sheer disbelief as I rubbed shoulders and shared ideas. As well as the new friends and acquaintances I made, it was the sessions called 'language that sings' and 'do your people breathe?' which are still fresh in my mind. They unlocked fresh ideas and opportunities to explore the potential of well-written – and indeed clearly-spoken words. I came face to face with similes again – a face I hadn't deliberately looked in since my days at 6th form – and in a moment of inspiration, the underside of a leaf became 'pale as the palm of an Ethiopian woman's hand', and its edges became 'as delicate as lace...a well woven hemline'. I was on a roll!

Well, there are no similes in these stories in today's Bible reading, but the language sings of activity and impact, of movement and response, of interaction and reaction, and at the heart of both stories in Mark 10:46-52 and Mark 11:12-26, it is the power of well-spoken words which stand tall for me. It is honest and deliberate word which precede the miracles, both the words of Jesus and the words of those who become witnesses to the miracles. Each situation presents its own unique dilemma – Bartimaeus can't see, but would like to, and the fig tree should be fruit-bearing but isn't! The solution? It seems that speaking into the situation with faith changed both of these situations, and miraculously so.

Bartimaeus drew attention to himself by calling on the 'Son of David' to 'have mercy', and so the conversation starts. By-standers are drawn in, initially in trying to keep Bartimaeus quiet. Then they assist the conversation by calling him over to Jesus. It is Jesus' question 'what do you want me to do for you?' that prompts

Bartimaeus to ask specifically, and he grasps the opportunity, stating quite clearly 'I want to see'. This was no longer a generic 'bless me' request, but a deliberate 'give me sight' request. And the result? No surgery, no physical intervention, and no more questions either. In fact, the conversation continues with an interesting response to 'go' and an acknowledgement that his faith had given him sight. I think that God is still open to hearing us ask specifically of him today...

In complete contrast, it is hard to miss Jesus' disappointment in the second reading. It is clear that he approaches the fig tree with an expectation, only to find leaves. Hunger, hunger, everywhere (for Jesus at least) and not a fig in sight. And on entering the temple, he finds commerce taking place rather than communion. Where Bartimaeus couldn't see what he wanted to see, Jesus wasn't seeing what he expected to see. So he speaks to each dilemma, reducing the fig tree to fruitlessness, and removing the traders from the temple. In both cases he spoke clearly and decisively, and what he spoke changed the course of events.

On reading these accounts again, I am encouraged by the thought that the opportunity to ask specifically of God is still possible today, and that I can speak solutions to disappointing dilemmas that present themselves. I'm pinching myself now, because the power of my words spoken with faith in God, and with an intent that honours God, can move' mountains' or things which seem impossible...as long as I have no doubt, of course!

TO THINK ABOUT:

1. Which do you identify with the most (Bartimeus or the Fig Tree), and why?
2. What do you need Jesus to do for you?
3. What might happen if you allow Jesus to open your eyes?
4. What are the causes of spiritual hunger today?
5. How confident are you that God answers your prayers?

6. Finale

NIBBLES

What do you most enjoy about Easter?

STARTER

Although Psalm 22 was written centuries before Jesus, it gives us a graphic insight into his suffering. Use parts of this psalm to lead you into praising Jesus for all he went through for you.

MAIN COURSE

- As we head towards Good Friday, have you learned anything new about Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion from the things you have read this week?
- As this series of home-groups ends, has reading through Mark's gospel made any difference to you?

READ MARK 12:28-44

- Though Jesus is only asked for one commandment, he adds a second to his reply. What relationship does the second one have to the first one?

What does it mean to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?

➤ How does the widow in verses 41-44 put this into practice?

➤ In chapter 10, Jesus told a rich young man to give away all his wealth, now he commends a widow for doing just that. What does he want us to understand from these 2 examples?

READ MARK 14:12-42

➤ What do the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper symbolise for us?

➤ Why is this so significant?

➤ How might Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane help those who are unsure whether Jesus is the only way to God?

READ MARK 14:53-72

➤ How does Jesus demonstrate the kind of discipleship he desires in us?

➤ How is Peter's betrayal of Jesus different from Judas'?

DESSERT

Reflection: Sheridan Voysey (writer, speaker and broadcaster): We Have a Visitor

Imagine that you're a member of an organised crime ring with connections to corrupt city authorities. Imagine that you discover someone who knows your gang's every deed—every scheme and secret deal. One night you decide to round him up. He must be silenced.

'We have a visitor,' says one of your thugs as they bring him to you. 'Is it true,' you ask the man, 'that you know of my business dealings?' He stays silent. 'Is it true!?' yells another thug, slapping your suspect across the face. The man looks you in the eye and nods.

Plans are made for the man's removal. You pick up your Blackberry and start dialing. The city mayor always takes your call.

A news conference is held the next morning. As journalists gather and cameras roll, the mayor rises to the podium. 'We have intercepted a terrorist plot to blow up Town Hall,' he says—your victim's face flashed across television screens. 'We expect a fast trial and a most serious sentence.'

The innocent man is held in custody. With a nod from a compliant superior, a group of bored cops take to him. They push him into a back room and start beating and spitting on him. They force him onto all fours and kick him up the backside. They put lipstick on his face and pour beer down the front of his jeans. They wrench an old judge's wig on his head and shout, 'Have mercy on us, oh Judge! Forgive us for our terrible crimes!'

The holder of your secrets is indeed tried quickly. He is declared guilty and jailed in a maximum security compound. And there, after another call from your Blackberry, your incarcerated cronies go to work.

They enter your victim's cell as he cowers in the corner. They throw him to the floor and strip him naked. Rolling him onto his stomach they stretch him out and lash his feet together with plumber's tape. They pull his flailing arms behind his back and tape together his wrists. 'The mouth?' asks one of them. 'And the nose,' comes the reply. Three men hold your victim down as loop upon loop of black tape is wound around his face—starting from the chin, up to the lips, and finally across his nostrils.

Sweat covers his body. His lungs heave for air. His eyelids are swollen. His dead body is found three hours later.

Mission complete.

Now imagine that your victim is not just a man, but a God-man. And imagine that he is not just your victim but your liberator. Imagine that he had entered your life to save you from the sin and evil that engulfs you. Imagine that he acquiesced to your torture in order to free not just you but your mob, the mayor, the prison guards and crooked cops, the cronies, the journalists, the cameramen and watching audience.

How do you feel?

There's a knock at the door. You have a visitor. This story isn't over.

TO THINK ABOUT:

1. What does Jesus' Gethsemane experience teach us about the character of God?
2. What does it teach us about love?
3. What does it teach us about submission to God?
4. What does it teach us about submission to others?
5. In Mark 14 and 15 Jesus was rejected by the Jews, the Romans (Gentiles) and his friends. All of humanity was guilty. How have you rejected him? How might his response to that rejection affect your worship?

CHRIST CHURCH, MORETON

We want to be a **W**elcoming Church

Because Jesus welcomed all who came to him

an **E**vangelsing Church

*Because we believe that everyone has the right to hear the
Good News of Jesus*

a **L**oving Church

*Because Jesus commanded his followers to love one
another*

a **L**earning Church

*Because we are in the business of making disciples, and
disciples must always be learners*