

christ church
moreton

Not ashamed of the gospel

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Spring 2020



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moreton

*making disciples
growing disciples
being disciples*

2020

For I am **not ashamed**
of the **gospel**,
because it is the
power of God
that brings **salvation** to
everyone who **believes**.

Romans 1:16

Our theme verse for this year highlights the importance of the gospel – it is the gospel which brings someone to faith, and it is the gospel which shapes us to then live out that faith authentically. If Christ Church is to continue Making Disciples, Growing Disciples, and Being Disciples, we need to make sure that the gospel is central to all that we do.

This term in our home-groups we are studying Mark's gospel. In these first 4 sessions we will see what Mark tells us about Jesus, and about the responses there were to him during his earthly ministry. Then during Lent we will think more about what Mark tells us about Jesus' death. The aim in all of this isn't just that we will know more, but that we will be better equipped to be faithful disciples today, and more confident in sharing the good news of Jesus with others.

DIARY FOR THIS TERM:

Wednesday 8 th Jan	Prayer Meeting
w/b Mon 12 th Jan	Home Groups 1 – Follow me
Wednesday 22 nd Jan	Third Wednesday – Old Testament Gospel
w/b Mon 26 th Jan	Home Group 2 – Why did Jesus come?
Wednesday 5 th Feb	Prayer Meeting
w/b Mon 10 th Feb	Home Group 3 – Sowing the seed
w/b Mon 17 th Feb	Home Group 4 – Bread and fish
Wednesday 26 th Feb	Ash Wednesday Informal Communion
w/b Mon 2 nd March	Lent home-groups start

1. Follow Me

WELCOME

What was the best thing about your Christmas?

WORSHIP

We live in a world where things seem constantly to change. It is good to know that the Lord our God never changes, and that what we read of him in the Bible is still true today. Praise God for revealing himself in his word; for his love, faithfulness, mercy, justice etc.

WORD

Mark begins his gospel with an explicit claim about who Jesus is – Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. I guess that we are quite familiar with those terms, and maybe take them for granted, but Mark must have known that his first readers would need convincing that Jesus really was the Messiah – the rightful king of God's people, and that he was the Son of God.

Although we might be used to talking of Jesus in that way, many (maybe most) in our society have little understanding of who Jesus is, and even less understanding of what it means for him to be the Messiah, the Son of God. So as we look at the first part of Mark's gospel, it is worth looking out for things which we might be able to share with others who ask us what was so special about Jesus.

Read Mark 1:1-13

- How did the crowd respond to John's preaching?
- What does that tell you about their sense of need?
- Do you think that there is a similar sense of need around today:
 - in our society?
 - in the church?

Read Mark 1:14-39

We often think of the gospel solely as a message about the forgiveness of sins. But Jesus begins his ministry proclaiming a different kind of good news. What was the good news Jesus talked about, and what response did it call for (v.14-15)?

When Jesus called Simon and Andrew, he said that they would be sent out to 'fish for people.'

- What do you think he meant?
- Was that calling to fish for people specific to Simon and Andrew, or does it apply to all followers of Jesus?

In v.21-31, Mark shows Jesus having authority as a teacher (v.22), authority over evil spirits (v.25), and authority over sickness (v.31)

- Which do you find most striking, and why?
- What do each of these show you about who Jesus is?

The healing of Simon's mother-in-law took place on the Sabbath, when no-one was permitted to travel more than was absolutely necessary. But as soon as the Sabbath was over (at sunset) a crowd very quickly gathered – *That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all who were sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.* (v.32-34)

The people were so eager to get to Jesus that they didn't even wait for next morning. There was an obvious need there – many people who were suffering.

- What does Jesus do next day?
- What does this tell you about Jesus' priorities? Why was this so important?
- Does this tell us anything about what our priorities should be?

WORK

Our theme verse for this year say *'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.'*

Are there people who you would like to be able to share the gospel with? Share these people and situations with each other, and then pray for each other, that the Lord will help you to live in such a way that there will be opportunities to share with those people something of your faith.

2. Why did Jesus come?

WELCOME

Who is the most interesting person you have met?

WORSHIP

God welcomes us into his family not because we are special, but because he loves us unconditionally. Spend some time praising God for accepting you and making you part of his family.

WORD

One of the remarkable things about Jesus was the range of different people he was prepared to mix with. Last week we saw him call four fishermen to be his first disciples – ordinary working people. After that, we find Jesus healing a man suffering from leprosy – despite that fact that the Old Testament law said that anyone touching such a person themselves became ceremonially unclean.

On into Mark 2 we find that the next disciple to be called was a tax-collector – certainly not the sort of person you would expect a rabbi to call. Immediately after that we find Jesus at dinner with people who were generally classed as 'sinners.'

Just in those two chapters we find Jesus mixing with, and being welcomed by, all kinds of people. In fact, the only people who seem to have rejected Jesus from very early on in his ministry were the 'teachers of the law' – the religious leaders of the day.

Read Mark 1:40 – 2:17

Last week we saw Jesus healing Simon's mother-in-law of a fever. But healing someone suffering from leprosy was even more remarkable.

- Why did Jesus heal the man (v.41)
- Why is it important for us to know this about Jesus?
- Why did Jesus not want news of this healing spread around?

Next, we find Jesus meeting with someone who was paralysed. The four men who brought their friend to Jesus knew what they wanted Jesus to do. But what did Jesus see as being the paralytic's greatest need?

- Do you think that being forgiven by God is really that important?
- Do people in our society generally see forgiveness as a significant issue?
- Have there been situations where you know what you wanted God to do, but actually God gave you what you needed rather than what you wanted?

- Why were the teachers of the law so upset by what Jesus said?
- In what way did Jesus' healing of the paralytic answer their questions?
- According to v.17, why had Jesus come?
- What do you think that means?

Jesus came announcing the kingdom and calling people to follow him.

- What change would need to take place in the Pharisees before they could answer Jesus' call?
- Does this have anything to tell us about how we share the gospel today?

WORK

The first thing that Matthew did after Jesus called him, was to throw a party for his friends, and invite Jesus to it. Building relationships with those who aren't Christians is a vital part of being 'fishers of men', but it isn't always an easy thing to do. Are there things that you could do as a group that would give non-Christians a chance to meet with Christians? It might be that some of you have few non-Christian friends, but you can still be praying for and supporting those who do.

3. Sowing the seed

WELCOME

Spring might seem a long way off at the moment – but it won't be long before keen gardeners will be out planting seeds. If you had green fingers, and could grow anything you wanted to, what would you have in your garden?

WORSHIP

Psalm 145 begins *I will exalt you, my God the King, I will praise your name for ever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.* The psalm then goes on to give many reasons why we should praise the Lord. Use verses from the psalm to praise God.

WORD

There have been times when I have heard an evangelist speak, and they have explained the gospel so clearly, and have called for a response so sensitively, that I have been sure that any non-Christian listening is bound to be convinced, and would want to respond. But more often than not, they don't. I know people who have heard the good news so many times, and yet still have ignored the message.

I guess that all of us doing this study will have family or friends who we would love to become Christians. Maybe we have had

opportunities to speak to them about Jesus, but with no response at all.

Why is it that some people can hear the good news, and respond, whilst for others it just seems to go in one ear and out the other? Why do some people respond joyfully to the message of Jesus, whilst others seem completely resistant to it?

Read Mark 4:1-34

The parable of the sower is one of Jesus' best known parables. In v.12, the disciples ask Jesus about the parables.

- How would you summarise Jesus' answer?

We usually expect preachers to speak in a way which will make things clearer (whether they succeed or not is another matter!) But Jesus seems to say that he used parables to keep things hidden.

- How do parables like this one help Jesus' followers to understand his kingdom, but hinder the understanding of those who do not follow him?

Jesus tells the disciples that the seed is "the word" (v.14)

- What does that mean?
- Who do you think is the farmer?

In his explanation of parables, Jesus quotes the book of Isaiah. The quotation is taken from Isaiah 6, where Isaiah is first of all commissioned by God as a prophet, and then told that even though he will speak God's words, the people will not listen.

- If God knew that they wouldn't listen, why did he give Isaiah the job of speaking?

In quoting from Isaiah, Jesus seems to be saying that the purpose of the parables is to prevent people from turning and being forgiven.

- What do you think he means?

Look through Jesus explanation of the parable in verses 14-20.

- What kind of people are described by the four different types of soil?
- Do you know people like these?

You should never try to make every element in a parable stand for something – it is the general thrust of the story which is important. However, maybe there is something significant in the fact that the farmer sows the seed on bad soil as well as good – presumably with the exception of the path he wouldn't know beforehand which was the good soil, and which had weeds in it, or rocks under it.

- How might this influence the way in which we share the gospel with others?
- What encouragements do the parables of the growing seed and the mustard seed (v.26-34) give us about the growth of God's kingdom?

Read Mark 4:35-41

The disciples are quite naturally afraid of the storm and disturbed that Jesus seems not to be concerned about their drowning. Once Jesus calms the storm, however, they are still terrified.

- How does their fear after the storm differ from their previous fear?
- Why did Jesus criticise the disciples for having no faith (v.40)?

WORK

In Ephesians 6:19, Paul says *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.* In our first study, you were encouraged to think of those people with whom you would like to share the good news. Continue to pray for opportunities, and pray that when those opportunities arise, God will enable you to use them wisely.

4. Bread and Fish

WELCOME

What's the best meal you have ever eaten?

WORSHIP

Lent is a time when many Christians give up something they enjoy, in order to have the time to enjoy the Lord himself more. Take some time to praise God for all the good things he does give us, then praise him for what he has done to make it possible for us to have a relationship with him.

WORD

We live in a society where some people react very strongly against Christianity, and consequently against Christians. Scientists like Richard Dawkins, and novelists like Philip Pullman are particularly scathing, but most of us have probably met people who seem to have a deep dislike of anything to do with Jesus.

This shouldn't surprise us, as even Jesus faced the same sort of hostility from some people. Others, though not hostile, were only interested in him while he met their needs. But some did recognise him for who he was.

Read Mark 6:1-5

- What response did Jesus get from the people of his home town?

It might be that they thought they knew who Jesus was; after all they had known him for years, and they didn't like it when he seemed to be something other than 'the carpenter from down the road.'

- Do you think that sometimes people in our society think they know who Jesus is, and are offended if we try to talk about who he really is and why he came?

Read Mark 6:30-56

As usual, a large crowd gathers around Jesus. Mark tells us that *he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.* (v.34)

- What do you think that means?
- What was Jesus response to the situation? (v.34) Why did he respond in that way?

The importance of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is seen from the fact that it is the only miracle (except Jesus' resurrection) to be found in all four gospels.

- What does it teach us about Jesus and his power?
- What great Old Testament event does this miracle have similarities with? (see Exodus 16:1-12)
- How does looking back to this Old Testament event help to explain who Jesus is?

Straight after feeding the crowd, Jesus sent his disciples off in the boat, while he went away alone to pray.

- What happens next?

Mark tells us that the disciples were amazed *for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened* (v.52)

- What should they have understood about the loaves?
- And what did Mark mean by saying that their hearts were hardened?
- What steps can we take to prevent ourselves having hardened hearts?

Read Mark 8:22-30

- In what way were the disciples like the blind man in Bethsaida?
- How did you come to recognise who Jesus really is?

Read Mark 8:27-9:1

- Why do you think Jesus responds so harshly to Peter (8:33)?
- What does Jesus say is involved in being a disciple (8:34)?

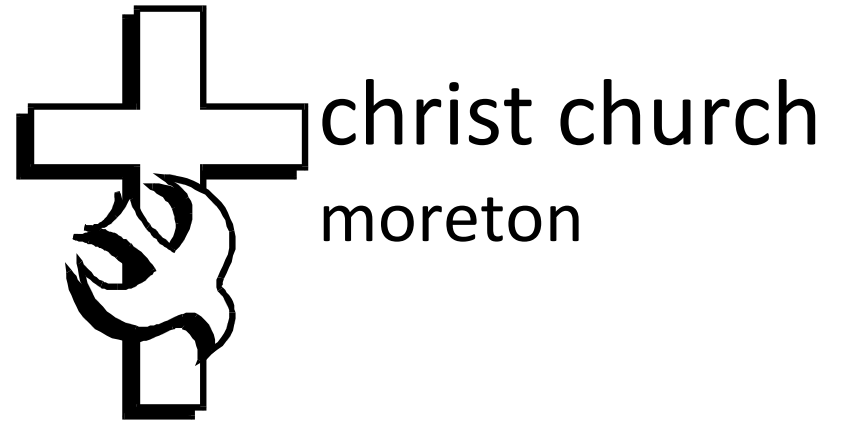
- What does that mean in practice?
- In evangelism we are usually keen to tell others what is good about becoming a Christian. Do you think that we say enough about the things Jesus talks about here?

WORK

Next week sees the start of Lent – the 40 day period running up to the celebration of Easter. Lent is often seen as a time to give something – but really the only reason for doing that is to put something better in its place.

Is there something you could do as a group this Lent? It might be that you will commit to praying daily for specific things for one another, it might be committing to pray daily for those you would like the chance to witness to. It might be working to share a favourite Bible verse each day via social media.

There are many possibilities – is there something you could all do?



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