

Towards the Cross

CHRIST CHURCH
HOME-GROUPS
Lent 2020



christ church
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 our first 4 studies we saw what Mark tells us about who Jesus is, and about some of the responses there were to him during his earthly ministry. In the next 4 studies we follow Jesus last weeks, as he approaches the cross.

DIARY FOR THIS TERM:

w/b Mon 2 nd March	Home Groups 1 – Choices
w/b Mon 9 th March	Home Group 2 – The King arrives
Wednesday 18 th March	Prayer Meeting
w/b Mon 23 rd March	Home Group 3 – The rejected King
w/b Mon 30 th March	Home Group 4 – The cross
Thursday 9 th April	Passover Meal

1. Choices

WELCOME

If someone was to ask you, 'What is the best thing about being a Christian?' what would you say?

WORSHIP

'But what about you?' Jesus asked. 'Who do you say I am?'

An important part of worship is recognising who Jesus is, so that we can give him the honour and praise he deserves. Praise him for what the Bible tells us about who he is and why he came.

WORD

I used to have a friend who would only ever give to charity if it involved buying a lottery ticket. Give Nigel something where he stood a chance of winning something (even if it was only a remote chance), and he could be quite generous. Ask him just to give, or to support someone doing a sponsored event, and the answer was always 'no.'

I guess that a lot of people are like that – wanting to think that there is something in it for them. And sometimes I've heard evangelists who seem to play on that – telling people all the good things that come from following Jesus. And, of course, there are great blessings in being a Christian, not only for eternity, but also now. But to claim that faith in Jesus is a short cut to solving all your problems seems to

me to be a long way from what Jesus himself said. The life he called his followers to could at times be really tough.

Read Mark 10:13-16

It is a much loved passage, showing Jesus' care for children.

- But – what did Jesus mean by saying that 'the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'?
- What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God like a little child?
- Why is that the only way of entering the kingdom?

Read Mark 10:17-31

- What is the one key thing that the rich ruler must do to inherit eternal life?
- Why must he do so?
- Does the same apply to us?

Read Mark 10:32-45

For the third time Jesus predicts his death. Does he say anything different this time?

- Why do you think Jesus repeated the prediction of his death (and why did Mark include it three times)?

- Given what Jesus has just said, what is ironic about James' and John's request (v35-37)
- What do you think Jesus meant by the cup he is to drink and the baptism he is to be baptised with (v.38-39)?
- In v.35 Jesus explains again why he has come. How does that also act as a motivation for his followers?

Read Mark 10:46-52

- Why do you think Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted him to do for him?
- Once Jesus heals him, Bartimaeus sets out to follow Jesus 'along the road.' What road is Jesus on see 10:33-34)?
- What might it mean for Bartimaeus to be on that road?

WORK

Are there areas of life where you find it difficult to 'deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus'? Maybe at work? Or in a particular relationship? Pray for one another in these areas.

2. The King arrives

WELCOME

What is the biggest crowd you have ever been part of?

WORSHIP

Colossians 1:15-20 is one of the Bible's great descriptions of Jesus. Use it to encourage you to praise him for his greatness, his power, and his grace.

WORD

Failing to recognise someone can be very embarrassing. I have occasionally seen someone out in Moreton who I have recognised, and spoken to them, only to realise later that it wasn't the person I thought it was!

It can be easily done. And, of course, if you have failed to recognise who someone is, you might well have wrong expectations of them. That is what happened at the first Palm Sunday. The crowd thought they recognised who Jesus was, but they had completely misunderstood what that meant. It is a mistake that thousands have made ever since.

READ Mark 11:1-25

- How does Mark show us the significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem?
- Why is Jesus so angry with what is taking place in the temple?
- Why do you think that Mark sandwiches the account of Jesus clearing the temple between the two incidents with the fig tree?
- What kind of fruit was Jesus looking for in Israel?

READ Mark 11:27-33

- In verse 27, Jesus is asked a seemingly straightforward question about his authority. What does Jesus reply and the discussion that follows show about the real motives of those who asked?
- Why doesn't Jesus answer them?
- Are there times when we shouldn't answer questions? Why?

Read Mark 12:1-17

- In the parable of the tenants in the vineyard, Jesus draws on Isaiah 5:1-7. What point is he making?

- How are the religious leaders about to fulfil the scripture Jesus quotes in verses 10-11?
- What does the parable mean for us?

The question that Jesus is asked in verse 14-15 is another attempt to trick him. Jesus not only avoid their trap, but his answer establishes an important principle.

- What sort of things are rightfully the states (Caesar's) and what are God's?

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?

WORK

As we try to share the good news of Jesus with our family and friends we will still face some of the issues Jesus faced – misunderstanding about who he is, trick questions from those who really have no interest, and at times genuine questions from those who do want to understand what we believe and why.

Pray for one another – for opportunities to share the good news in the run up to Easter (you might like to share names of specific people you want to be able to speak to), and for wisdom in giving good answers.

Wednesday 18th March

THIRD WEDNESDAY – LENT PRAYER SUPPER

Home groups don't meet this week – instead we will meet together in the Parish Centre for a supper of jacket potatoes with various fillings and salad etc, followed by various prayer activities. It will be for all ages, starts at 6.30 pm and will be finished by 8.00 pm.

3. The rejected King

WELCOME

Have you given anything up, or have you committed to something new for Lent?

WORSHIP

Philippians 2:6-11, although originally written to encourage good relationships among God's people, also reminds us of Jesus giving himself for us – even death on a cross. Use these words and ask God to help you understand something more of what it meant for Jesus to do that for you.

WORD

It has often been noticed that the death of Jesus dominates the gospels. A few years ago I read a biography of President Kennedy. It was a huge book – 700 pages, but despite the fact that he was assassinated, there were only 10 pages about Kennedy's death. If you look at most biographies, the writers want to talk about the person's life, not their death. In fact, their deaths are often glossed over. And yet, one third of each Gospel talks about the last few days of Jesus' life and his death on a cross.

Jesus taught many wonderful things – our discipleship involves learning from what he taught. Jesus did many wonderful things –

our discipleship involves becoming more like him, his compassion, his service, his love. But more important than either of these is Jesus' death.

Read Mark 14:1-11

- What different motives are present in the conflict that arises at the home of Simon the Leper?
- What concerns do the objectors raise?
- What does this tell us about the importance of commitment to worship and care for the poor?

Read Mark 14:32-42

- What was the cup which Jesus prayed so urgently about? Why did he long that God would take it from him? (see Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15, Psalm 75:8)

Many people question whether the *only* way to God is through Jesus and his death on the cross.

- How does this passage help to answer that?

Tom Wright has written:

'Gethsemane invites us to consider, above all, what it meant for Jesus to be, in a unique sense, God's son. The very moment of greatest intimacy – the desperate prayer to 'Abba, Father' – is also the moment where, hearing the

answer 'No', he is set on the course for the moment of God-forsakenness on the cross.'

READ MARK 14:43-72

- Why was it significant that all the disciples deserted Jesus?
- How does Jesus demonstrate the kind of discipleship he desires in us?
- How is Peter's betrayal of Jesus different from Judas'?

Read Mark 14:12-26

Jesus told his disciples that the bread and wine would represent his body and blood. How has what you have thought about in this session helped you to understand the death of Jesus and how it relates to you? How can this make the communion service more significant for you?

WORK

As he drew nearer to the cross Jesus became increasingly alone. First the crowds who cheered for him on Palm Sunday deserted him, then his disciples did, until he was alone.

Today, many Christians feel the same – sometimes because they are the only one in their family who is following Jesus, sometimes

because of persecution which makes meeting with other Christians all but impossible.

Pray for people in that position, that they will know that Jesus has shared their aloneness.

Is there anything you can do to help anyone in that situation?

4 The Cross

WELCOME

What is the best present you've ever been given? What made it so special to you?

WORSHIP

When I survey the wondrous cross As we approach Good Friday and Easter, focus on what the death of Jesus means for you, and then thank him for what he has done.

WORD

We've spent this series trying to understand who Jesus is, why he came, and how we can share that with those who don't yet know him. But whatever else we might or might not say about Jesus, you certainly can't give an explanation of him without talking about the cross. Jesus himself said that is why he had come, and we sell the gospel short if we leave the cross out.

Of course, Mark, like the other gospels, doesn't actually explain the significance of the crucifixion – you'll need to go into the epistles to find that. What Mark does give us is the story – a story which we need to know for ourselves, and to always be ready to share.

Read Mark 8:27-32

- Why do you think that immediately after Peter had realised who Jesus is, Jesus talks about his coming death?

Read Mark 15:1-32

Four groups or individuals are involved in Jesus' death – the soldiers, the Jewish leaders, Pilate, and the crowd. How would you describe each one's attitude to Jesus?

- The soldiers
 - The Jewish leaders
 - Pilate
 - The Crowd
-
- In what way do their attitudes parallel those of men and women today?

 - We know virtually nothing about Barabbas, except the brief comments in the gospels. But – in what way does Barabbas stand for every believer?

 - The wine mixed with myrrh offered to Jesus would have had a narcotic effect. Why does Jesus refuse it?
(It might help to look at Mark 10:38, 14:25, 36)

Read Mark 15:33-39

- In what way is the centurion's confession a climax to the whole of Mark's gospel?

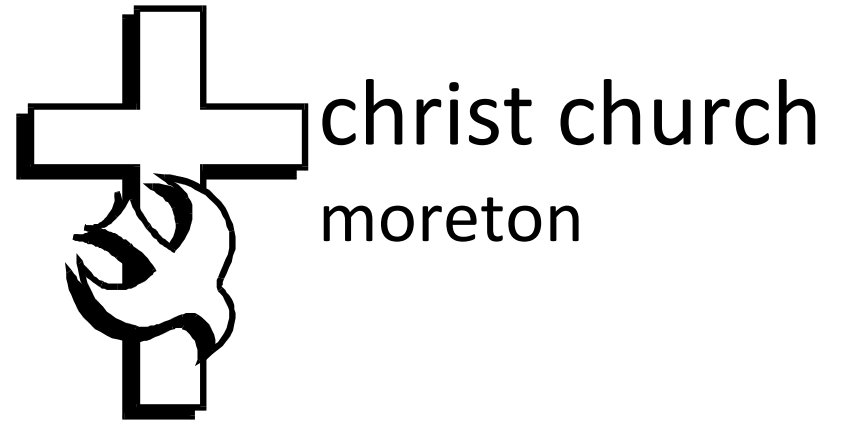
It was seeing Jesus' death that convinced the centurion of who Jesus was.

- How can we present Jesus' death to our society in a way which will help people today to understand Jesus' identity?

WORK

Jesus' crucifixion was, of course, not the end of the story. On Easter Day we will celebrate his resurrection, and that he is alive today.

At the end of Study 2 you prayed for opportunities to share the good news with others. As we approach Easter, pray for opportunities to tell others about your own experience of Jesus – what knowing him has meant for you. Are there any family and friends you want to invite to Easter services? Pray for them.



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