

Reading Together
Year Long New Testament Bible Reading
January 11 - 17

January 11 – Mark 7: 24 -37

There are two healings that take place in this passage. In the first healing Jesus drives a demon from a Greek (non- Jewish) woman's daughter. What Jesus says to her seems to be very harsh, but Jesus' point is that the Jews (the children) are to be the first to receive the benefits of the gospel. However, notice that Jesus says, "First, let the children eat." The clear implication is that one day the power of Christ will break out into the gentile world, as well. Why did Jesus respond this way? Because in order for salvation to come, Christ had to first be offered to the Jews as their Messiah, and then rejected, so that through the cross salvation could come to the world. As we see in this passage even the crumbs of the gospel are enough to bring healing to the lives of any who willingly submit and choose to believe. Notice that even as the woman comes to seek healing for her daughter it is with complete humility. She falls at Jesus' feet, and acknowledges Jesus as Lord. In verses 31 – 37 Jesus heals a deaf and mute man and again in verse 37 we see people are overwhelmed with amazement at what Jesus can do. Jesus' work is exactly what God promised the Messiah would do in: ***Isaiah 35:5-6*** *Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ 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.*

January 12 – Mark 8: 1- 30

Jesus has already fed 5,000, and now Mark records a second time when Jesus feeds a large crowd. This time it is over 4,000 people. Notice how this account ends. The Pharisees are not convinced by all of the miracles that Jesus has done so they ask Jesus for a sign. It just shows you how hard their hearts were. Jesus has already given them sign after sign! They have twice witnessed him feeding

multitudes of people with very little food, as well as seeing numerous other miracles. The evidence was there, but their hearts were so hard that they could not believe. In Mark 8: 14 – 21 Jesus warns the disciples to be on guard for the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod. What Jesus meant was that the way that Herod and the Pharisees thought could poison the disciples' thinking, if they were to start to think that way. If they become too worried about power, like Herod, or they became too worried about outward appearances, like the Pharisees, they would forget what is really important—the heart. As dull as the disciples seem to be at times what Peter says in Mark 8: 29 is amazing, because after all that Peter has seen, he comes to the realization that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah).

January 13 – Mark 8: 31 – 9: 13

In yesterday's reading we saw Peter make an amazing confession that Jesus is the Christ and now today as Jesus explains what that really means (that he must suffer and die), Peter has the nerve to rebuke Jesus and tell him not to talk that way. Peter is still following his own agenda. Without even realizing it, Peter has been corrupted by the yeast of Herod and the Pharisees that Jesus warned about in yesterday's reading. The reason he cannot stand the thought of Jesus suffering and dying is because in Peter's mind the Messiah was all about power not weakness. Jesus makes it clear that not only will Jesus have to suffer and die but those who follow after him will also have to take up their own cross if they want to follow him.

But then in 9:1 Jesus tells them that if they do that they will see glory, and in 9: 2-13 that is exactly what happens to Peter, James, and John. They get a glimpse of heaven, and they see Jesus in his glory with Moses and Elijah.

January 14 – Mark 9: 14 – 50

As Jesus, Peter, James and John come down from the mountain, they come upon a scene where the rest of Jesus' disciples are trying to drive a demon out of a possessed boy, but they cannot do it. Notice the contrast between the disciples and the boy's father. The

disciples are convinced that they have the power to drive the demon out and are amazed that they can't (apparently they forgot to pray). The boy's father knows he needs faith but doubts he has enough (see verse 24) and he asks Jesus to increase his faith to make the miracle possible.

In Mark 9: 33 -41 we see the disciples are still wrapped up in themselves. First they argue about who is the greatest, then they are troubled that they seem to have competition because someone who wasn't one of them was driving out demons in Jesus' name. Do you remember how Jesus warned them about the yeast of Herod and the Pharisees? That yeast has infected them as they become concerned with power and prestige.

In Mark 9: 42 – 50 Jesus says something that makes us say "What???" It sounds like Jesus is encouraging self mutilation, but Jesus is using exaggeration (but not really exaggeration if you stop and think about the truth of what he is saying) to make a point. Sin is such a serious matter that whatever is causing us to sin needs to be cut out of our lives. It is absolutely foolish to hold onto something that is temporal (that will not last), if holding onto it means that you will lose eternity.

January 15 – Mark 10: 1 – 31

In Mark 10: 1-12 Jesus lays out the only Biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage, which is marital unfaithfulness. Notice how Jesus affirms the institution of marriage by repeating the words that God said in the Garden as He brought Adam and Eve together as one. The reason why this so important is because marriage is a picture of Christ and his Church (Ephesians 5). A husband's faithfulness to the vows of marriage are a picture of Christ's faithfulness to his Church. A wife's faithfulness to her vows is a picture of the Church's faithfulness to Christ. Jesus then goes on to explain what real faith looks like in Mark 10: 13 -16. Real faith looks like that of a child— simple and trusting. Children don't know much, but they know they need someone to take care of them and protect them, and they know the person who will do that for them is more important than anyone

else in their lives. This story of the little children sets up the next story about the rich young ruler who loved his money so much he refused to give it up to follow Jesus. This young man wanted Jesus, but he wanted his own life and his stuff more. Jesus will not share the throne of your life with anything else. It is all or nothing. We either trust him completely in childlike faith, or we have no part in him.

January 16 – Mark 10: 32 – 45

Mark tells us in this passage that the disciples were astonished once again at Jesus, only this time it is because Jesus is going to Jerusalem to meet his certain death. Jesus knows what is going to happen to him because he tells the disciples exactly what is going to be done to him when he gets to Jerusalem. But somehow the disciples still don't understand, because the very next thing we see is James and John asking to be given places right next to Jesus when Jesus comes into his glory (James and John are thinking of an earthly kingdom where they will be right next to the throne). Jesus tells them that greatness in his kingdom only comes to those who are willing to serve with childlike submission and humility.

January 17 – Mark 10: 46 – 11: 11

After Jesus healed Bartimaeus, Jesus came riding into town on donkey on a day we now know as Palm Sunday. The common people are ready to make Jesus an earthly king, which as good as it sounds wasn't what Jesus came to be. Remember what he said to Peter back in chapter about the need for the Messiah to suffer. Jesus did come to be king, but also came to be out Great High Priest and offer an atoning sacrifice for our sin. As you read in this passage, the Pharisees are ready to kill Jesus, which, as strange as it sounds, is exactly what Jesus came to do.