

The Gospel of Mark What Kind of Kingdom?

Interpreting the Text:

1. We know how the Gospel ends, and early audiences would have known, too. Does Mark succeed at building suspense, even if we already know the end?
2. How does Mark's version of Jesus characterize the Kingdom of God? Does the title "kingdom" add a different connotation today than it did in Jesus' time?
3. The use of demons has changed from the first two chapters of Mark, where they were ailing individuals, to now where they are cited as a potential source of Jesus' power. What does this shift tell us about how the people of this time understand demons, magic, miracles, and that which cannot be easily explained?
4. Jesus expands his definition of family to everyone who does the will of God (3:31-35), but he dismisses his mother and siblings in the meantime. What is Jesus teaching us about the nature of family?

Applying the Text:

1. In the Parable of the Sower (4:1-9), where do you see yourself in the story? You may feel like the sower, sharing the teachings of Jesus Christ, or one of the types of soil. Have you changed who or what you most relate to in this parable over the course of your life?
2. Dr. Bartlett asks, "why do you think Jesus tells parables?" He suggests that Jesus and the author of Mark may have different motivations. How do you engage with parables? How do they support or challenge your understanding of Jesus' teachings?
3. While Jesus' teachings about familial relationships may be different from our contemporary understanding of family, there is something important about the 'chosen family' that the disciples create. How can we use this understanding of family and brotherhood to help support those in our community who have strained or non-traditional family systems?

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