

The Gospel of Mark Dense Disciples

Interpreting the Text:

1. The Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign from heaven (8:11). Why do you think that the Gospel places this question between two stories about feeding miracles?
2. Jesus seems to change his mind based on the Syrophoenician woman's argument (7:24-30). In a section where the disciples clearly don't learn anything, is this a scene where Jesus learns? If not, how do we explain his change of mind? If so, what do we learn about Mark's view of Jesus?
3. Is Mark's characterization of the disciples consistent? Are there examples of them getting anything right, or are they only slow to understand? Do we think Mark is showing his own bias towards individuals or their actions in his Gospel account?
4. After Jesus heals the deaf man, he tells the man not to tell anyone, but "the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it" (7:37b). Why do you think Jesus is so intent on secrecy?

Applying the Text:

1. In 2:27, Jesus said that "The Sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the Sabbath!" How does this help us understand his statement to his disciples: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while" (6:31)? Is there a lesson here to incorporate into our own faith journeys? What is the importance of rest in our daily lives?
2. The repetition of stories in these chapters may suggest that Jesus' teachings and salvation are available to all, including gentiles of this time. How can modern readers use these stories to make our communities more inclusive and welcoming, rather than exclusive?
3. Dr. Bartlett asks how the feeding miracles in Mark are related to contemporary food insecurity in our communities. How can these stories help us understand both the sorrow Jesus feels in the face of material hunger and the providential care God has for the needs of creation? How are we be inspired to act alongside God in the face of food insecurity?

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