



**The Message of Mark**  
**Mark 1-16**  
**May 5, 2019**

Sometimes we see the trees but not the forest. We focus on details but miss the big picture. Over the last four and a half years, we've considered many important details in Mark. It is imperative, however, that we remember the overall message.

Mark announces up front that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1:1). Then the first half of his Gospel (1-8) is dominated by example after example Jesus demonstrating his authority—over demons and in teaching (1:21-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30), over sicknesses (1:29-34, 40-45; 5:25-34; 6:53-56), over sin (2:1-12), over the Law (2:23-3:5), over the elements and creation (4:35-41; 6:30-52; 8:1-10), and even over death (5:21-43). All these things show in deed who Jesus is. They culminate with Peter, a Jew, correctly identifying Jesus as the Christ (8:29).

A variety of other key aspects of Jesus' ministry is intertwined with the key theme of his identity in chapters 1-8: announcing and teaching about the kingdom of God (1:14-15; 4:1-34), calling disciples to watch and learn from him (1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:7-13), and exposing the distorted ways of the Jewish religious leaders (2:1-3:6; 7:1-23; 8:11-15). Faith is heavily emphasized, and so is prayer.

The next major section of Mark focuses on servant nature of Jesus' kingship and the disciples inability to see this. The section is bookended by two accounts of the literal healing of blind men (8:22-26 and 10:46-52). In between are numerous examples of the

spiritual blindness of the twelve. Jesus teaches them repeatedly that the nature of his kingship is self-denial, service, and suffering, including three direct statements that he would be crucified (8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34). But each of those is followed by a striking example of the disciples' self-interest and lack of understanding of the way of the cross.

In 11-16, Jesus arrives in Jerusalem (cf. 10:32). Here he once again encounters the Jewish religious leaders and exposes their spiritual barrenness, lack of authority, hypocrisy, and errors (11-12). He predicts the punishment that would come upon them within a generation and points to his own return at an unknown date in the future (13). Then the way of the cross becomes a painfully literal reality as he agonizes in the garden, is betrayed and arrested, put through the mockery of a trial, and condemned to flogging and execution (14-15). But he is also affirmed as the Son of God by a Gentile (15:39) and then profoundly vindicated by God when He raised Him from the dead (16)!

The message of Mark is that Jesus is the All-authoritative one, the Christ, the Son of God. But He is not an overbearing Lord. He leads by serving, suffering, and sacrifice. All who would follow him must also walk in that way, the way of the cross. The message of Mark for us includes that:

1. Jesus is the Leader and Lord of the church. We belong to Him, look to Him, Follow Him, and answer to Him.
2. Our spiritual blindness can be healed by spending time with him, listening to his words and watching his example
3. Our relationships must be marked by self-denial, humility, and sacrifice.
4. Ministry is service and must be conducted with the actions and attitudes of humility, self-denial, and sacrifice.
5. All who lead in the church, must lead in the way of the cross.

