

ENCOUNTER.

Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

Lesson Six: Encounter His Call

Mark 10

Jesus is still calling us to come and follow Him.

I. The Pharisees Encounter Jesus ... Again (Mark 10:1-12)

Jesus and the twelve left Capernaum. It had served as the home base for His ministry, but He would not return to this familiar place again. The Lord was headed to Jerusalem. The journey to the cross had begun in earnest.

Jesus crossed to the eastern side of the Jordan River, back to the place where John the Baptist had been put to death by Herod Antipas. As He and the twelve traveled along, “crowds gathered around Him...and He once more began to teach them” (Mark 10:1).

The Pharisees were looking for ways to get rid of Jesus. In this encounter, they were probably hoping that Jesus would condemn Herod’s adultery as John had, and suffer the same fate. Because of the political ramifications of the marriage between Herod and Herodias, divorce was a hot topic.

Wanting to trip up Jesus, the Pharisees asked a controversial question “whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife” (Mark 10:2). This question was meant to polarize both the people and the rabbis over the two schools of rabbinical thought. One teaching leaned towards legalism while the other was extremely liberal. And the Pharisees also meant to provoke Herod Antipas’ anger towards Jesus. Jesus refused to take the bait and appealed to God’s Word and His original design from Genesis 2:24. Rodney Cooper gives us helpful commentary:

Jesus reminded his listeners that marriage did not come into existence with the law and Moses. It had been instituted at the beginning of creation by God. Marriage should not be entered into lightly or dissolved for trivial reasons.¹

God’s design for marriage is meant to be a lifelong union, but we don’t live in a perfect world. Sin has broken our world and relationships, sometimes beyond repair. Divorce is the tragic end in many cases. For those of you have been touched by divorce, please know there is healing in Jesus’ name! As we read in our lesson this week:

God’s heart is not to heap guilt or shame on you. His grace is bigger than any failure, any wrong turn, or any broken dream. He meets us in

our pain. He heals our hearts. And He guides us toward wholeness. You are not defined by a broken relationship. You are defined by the unchanging love of Christ, who sees you, forgives you, and calls you into a life filled with hope, restoration, and renewal. This is why the gospel is such *Good News!* ²

II. The Children Encounter Jesus (Mark 10:13-16)

Mommas began bringing children to Jesus to receive a blessing from Him. This action displeased the disciples, and they rebuked them. Obviously, they had had little experience with a scorned mom when her children are involved!

The disciples evidently imagined themselves to be the guardians of Jesus' schedule, which is comical in that the Eternal One was not (and is not) bound by time or space! John Phillips explains:

The disciples thought that the Master was far too important to be bothered with small children. Jesus, by contrast, thought that small children were too important not to be brought to Him in their tender years. The disciples rebuked the mothers, but the Lord rebuked the disciples. He bluntly told His disciples to stop hindering these little ones from being brought to Him. ³

Children, along with women, held a low status in this ancient society. Jesus was opposed to the marginalization of anyone. In His upside-down Kingdom, He brought children, and women (as well as Gentiles, and any other overlooked group) to the forefront of His ministry in order to validate their value and worth.

Jesus was indignant and called the children to Himself because they were a picture of what it takes for someone to come to God. One must come with all the simplicity, sincerity, and eagerness of a little child to receive the finished work of Jesus, joyfully and thankfully, knowing he/she cannot earn it and doesn't deserve it. The free gift of salvation is received with repentance and faith.

We must all become like a little child because "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14). This was not a statement on the spiritual condition of these children. It was a visual aid to help us understand the posture of total surrender to the Lordship of Christ. As adults, being savvy, worldly-wise, and holding a high view of our intelligence and capabilities, we are often hindered from seeing our need for Christ. We must all become like little children with simple faith and confidence in Jesus in order to be saved.

After finishing His teaching on children, Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them. In doing so, He raised the social standing and worth of children and the mommas who brought them.

III. The Rich Young Ruler Encounters Jesus (Mark 10:17-31)

A young man of high standing ran to the Lord and knelt before Him. This was an unusual gesture for a wealthy man, especially in public. His deference to Jesus seemed to demonstrate his sincerity and desire to know the answer to his questions, unlike the Pharisees who continually attempted to test or trick Him. He inquired what he must do to inherit eternal life. His words revealed he had been steeped in rabbinical performance tradition, which taught a works-based religion. In reality, a person does not have to do anything to receive an inheritance; it is something bestowed on the beneficiary (the one who receives the inheritance) from the deceased.

Jesus was trying to get the young man to confront the condition of his heart. At Jesus' mention of the commandments, the young man declared he had kept all the commandments from his youth up. He was referring to the time of his Bar Mitzvah at age thirteen. All the commandments? He had kept all the commandments? How self-deceived he was! Truly, "our sinful hearts have a habit of appraising us as better than we are."⁴

Jesus needed to expose the rich young ruler's spiritual blindness. Jesus told him to sell all he possessed and then he would have treasure laid up in heaven. And then He said, "Come and follow Me." Cooper clarifies: "Jesus' command to the man to **follow Me** came at the time when He was headed for Jerusalem and certain death at the hands of the religious leaders. This echoes Jesus' command to every disciple to take up the cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34)."⁵

The rich young ruler loved his accumulated wealth. His misplaced love of money prevented him from selling out to Jesus. The man was not as righteous as he perceived himself to be. The rich young ruler was unwilling to part with his riches. "He went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property" (Mark 10:22). As one commentary notes:

The problem is not wealth itself; the problem is a wealthy person who trusts in his wealth. An unhealthy dependence on worldly riches will obscure focus on kingdom values and eternal spiritual riches. And rich people can have a distorted picture of God's view of them, assuming that their wealth is proof of divine acceptance and blessing.⁶

The disciples pressed Jesus for more teaching on the matter after the wealthy ruler went away saddened. Salvation is impossible with men, rich or poor. It is beyond good works, self-effort, strict adherence to all human standards of religion, sacred rituals, or moral codes. But what is impossible with men is possible with God. Salvation is God's idea, planned "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4), provided by Him at infinite cost and offered to everyone as a gift of His grace.

In contrast with the man who let riches stand between him and the Kingdom, Peter spoke on behalf of the disciples. He reminded Jesus of how much he and the others had given up to follow Him. Peter wanted reassurance that the disciples' sacrifices would not be for naught. Jesus assured him there is no one who makes significant sacrifices for the sake of the gospel who will not be rewarded in this life or in the age to come.

IV. James and John Have an Up Close and Personal Encounter with Jesus (Mark 10:32-45)

As Jesus and the twelve made their way to Jerusalem, He foretold His impending death and resurrection. With complete disregard for the Lord's words, James and John followed up this tense moment by asking if one of them could sit on His right side and one on His left side in glory.

Bob Utley observes:

Every time Jesus predicted His suffering and death, His disciples began planning who would take His place as leader! Their mental perspective was still on an earthly kingdom and their being its leadership. The disciples did not understand until Pentecost! In one sense this incident is recorded to show how much the disciples did not understand (cf. Luke 18:34). This is cutting irony! ⁷

In spite of the Lord's repeated references to the cross, the disciples were apparently expecting the millennial kingdom when Messiah would overthrow Roman Rule to soon take place. And James and John wanted to call dibs on the seating arrangement before the others caught on.

While this wildly selfish request offends our understanding of what was about to happen to Jesus, He did not rebuke them, but asked if they could drink of His cup. "We are able," was their self-inflated response. They had no idea what they were saying!

In the meantime, the other ten became indignant over the request James and John had made. Once again, referencing the upside-down kingdom, Jesus summarized His teaching on servanthood saying, "Whoever wishes

to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45).

V. Bartimaeus Encounters Jesus (Mark 10:46-52)

Jesus and His disciples were traveling with a large crowd leaving Jericho. The road would have been well traveled, full of pilgrims heading to Jerusalem for the Passover. It would have been an ideal place for beggars to station themselves. Bartimaeus was the name of the blind beggar in Mark’s story. Cooper writes:

Bartimaeus called out **Son of David** – a clear messianic title. This title is not used often in Mark (who preferred the “Son of Man” designation). This could be, however, because Mark wrote to a largely Gentile audience. Bartimaeus was expressing faith in the one he knew could help him – the expected Messiah – and he begged for mercy.⁸

It is interesting that the unsighted man seemed “to see” with more clarity and spiritual sight than those who had eyes to see. While many attempted to silence the beggar, he cried out all the more. Jesus would not allow such a bold proclamation of faith to go unacknowledged. When Jesus called him, bystanders helped the blind man stand. Then, “throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus” (Mark 10:50). Few beggars would have owned such a garment, and it would have been coveted in the community of beggars, yet Bartimaeus cast it away. Cooper explains,

The blind man recognized that in this particular matter, his cloak could become a hindrance; it might trip him as he hurried toward his Benefactor ... with rare abandon he made absolutely sure the hindrance was removed before it had the chance to do damage. He had some sight after all, but it emanated from his soul and not his eyes.⁹

As the blind man approached Jesus with the help of those nearby, Jesus asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” And the blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!” And Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately, he regained his sight and began following Him on the road” (Mark 10:51-52).

Jesus wanted Bartimaeus to admit his need. Like the woman with the hemorrhage, Jesus pronounced that Bartimaeus’ faith had healed him, both physically and spiritually. Now, sighted and saved, he joined the other pilgrims accompanying Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. Even as the

destiny of a nation hung in the balance, Jesus made time for “the one.”
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

As the Lord Jesus moves closer to the cross, each encounter becomes even more impactful. The Pharisees, the mommas and their children, the rich young ruler, James and John, and Bartimaeus – each were granted up-close encounters with the Lord of Glory. For some, the encounter ended in salvation, the forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternity with Christ. But for others who stubbornly held to their own measure of self-righteousness, eternity in hell awaited them. Our eternal destination is decided by the decision made prior to our death to receive or reject Jesus. Hebrews 9:27 says, “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment (ESV).

Beloved, have you had an ENCOUNTER with Jesus that has led to your salvation? If not, Jesus is tenderly calling to you today to repent of your sin and surrender wholly to Him. Do not squander His invitation. In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul write, “Behold, now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation.” Acts 2:21 says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

*If you belong to Christ, you have already experienced His call. The Father initiates salvation by calling us to the Son through the Holy Spirit. But His call is more than an invitation to believe; it's a daily summons to follow, to trust, and to obey.*¹⁰

~ Encounter: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

¹ Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark* (Vol. 2), p. 165. Brentwood, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² *Encounter: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 175

³ Phillips, J. (2009). *Exploring the Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary* (Mark 10:14), p. 210. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp.

⁴ Evans, T. (2019). *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, p. 941. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁵ Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark* (Vol. 2), p. 168. Franklin, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁶ Evans, T. (2019). *The Tony Evans Bible Commentary*, p. 942. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁷ Utley, R. (2000). *The Gospel According to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter: Vol. Volume 2*, p. 121. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

⁸ Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark* (Vol. 2), p. 172. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁹ Powell, *Mark's Superb Gospel*, p. 281. Quoted by Cooper, R. (2000). *Mark* (Vol. 2), p. 173. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹⁰ *Encounter: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, p. 171.