

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN MARK'S GOSPEL - CHAPTER SIX

A legion in the Roman army consisted of 6000 men. This next story of a man possessed by a legion of evil spirits was the ultimate test of Jesus' authority over Satan. The setting for this seemingly unequal battle was a spiritual 'no-man's-land'. Gerasa, south-east of the Sea of Galilee, had been part of the territory of Gad but in Jesus' time was occupied partly by Israelites and partly by heathen neighbours. That may explain the presence of so many pigs which were banned food for the Jews.(Lev.11:7) The condition of a man possessed by so many demons is almost unimaginable. He was crazy, violent, self-harming, naked, and unbelievably strong. After various attempts to shackle and imprison him from which he had broken free, he was left to rule the cemetery which everyone else now avoided. Jesus entered his territory unafraid, recognising that inside the terrifying exterior was a man who longed to be free and to know Him. The man fell down before Jesus seeking help. On the other hand the demons within acknowledged Jesus but wanted to negotiate a new place to live before leaving their victim. He gave them permission to enter the pigs who should not have been there anyway. The demons yielded to Jesus' authority to command them to leave and allow them into the pigs. Two thousand pigs ran into the sea and drowned. Imagine the smell of rotting pork for weeks to come!(5:1-13)

This extraordinary event created huge interest. Their local 'monster' was now normal. Two opposite reactions occurred. First the city people implored Jesus to leave, caring more about their pigs than their tormented neighbour. Then the former madman implored Jesus to allow him to accompany his Lord. The gospel at work divides people into opposing camps. Jesus had an even better idea for His new follower. He wanted him to go home and tell his own people about what Jesus had done. He did and it was most fruitful. Where God sent him in future we have no idea. Being a missionary begins at home. If we have been faithful at home first, then God may send us anywhere.(5:14-20)

Jesus next meeting could not have been more different. A very respected religious leader came seeking help for his dying daughter. His fellow leaders were plotting to kill Jesus but his love for his needy daughter caused him to break ranks with them. Here was the third person to implore Jesus in this chapter. Jesus inspires passion for or against Him. The Lord willingly began to follow Jairus. In the middle of the emergency there was what must have seemed an outrageous interruption from a woman who had been sick for 12 years. Why did not the Lord make her wait? He knew the terrible consequence her gynaecological problem had had on her health, marriage, finances, and her relationship with God. He knew that the time she was ready for God was now, so He healed her at once and even took a few moments to draw her out of the crowd, let her give her testimony and then to commend her faith. Jesus is never in too much of a hurry for those whose hearts are ready for Him.(5:21-34)

As the woman went away rejoicing, bad news came from Jairus' home. His daughter had died. Everyone assumed that Jesus had waited too long. The Lord turned to the girl's father and encouraged him to trust Jesus not for the possible but the impossible. The crowd outside the home of Jairus and his family showed their hypocrisy when their loud wailing of supposed grief turned to laughter at the thought that she was only asleep. Taking with Him only those who still trusted Him for the miraculous, her parents and His three closest disciples, Jesus entered the girl's room and told her to get up, which she immediately did. He gave the parents two instructions, one simple – 'Feed her.' and the other impossible – 'Keep this quiet.'(5:35-43)

As before review your titles for each section of chapter 5 to see how you can improve or expand them. My suggestions for titles for chapter 4 are as follows:- 1-9 the parable of the soil; 10-20 the parable explained; 21-25 the parable of the lamp; 26-29 the parable of the seed; 30-32 the parable of the mustard seed; 33-34 parables for those who understand; 35-41 the parable afloat. Now read chapter 6 several times and give each section a heading or brief description. See if you can find a flow of ideas from one section to the next. Do not worry if you cannot see one at this stage. I propose for chapter 6, 1.v.1- 6; 2.v.7-13; 3.v.14-29; 4.v.30-44; 5.v.45-52; 6.v.53-56. Let us examine each section more closely.

6:1-6

Q.1 What two things impressed the people of Jesus' home town about His ministry? What on the other hand were their reasons for rejecting Him? What two things about our lives are vitally important if those who know us well are to take Jesus seriously? Why however may our families and neighbours have difficulty accepting our Christian witness just as Jesus' family and neighbours did?

Q.2 What can we learn about Jesus' family and occupation from this section? Where do you suppose He learned His trade?(Matthew 13:55) What does this passage imply about Joseph? In what role would this likely situation have placed Jesus among His family? What encouragement is this to us?

Q.3 Jesus explained in verse 4 why those who know God's messengers will reject them as being from Him. What reason does He give? What effect did their unbelief in Him have on what He could do for them?(Matthew 21:22)

6:7-13

Q.4 In preparing the twelve for their first mission Jesus did four things. What are they? Why are all four important in an effective Christian outreach?

What is the practical wisdom of sending Christian workers out in pairs? Who else in the New Testament worked in this way?(Acts 13:2; 15:39,40)

Q.5 What important lesson did Jesus want the disciples to learn by His instructions in verses 8 and 9? Washing a guest's feet was the normal mark of hospitality in those days. If as a Christian worker you left someone's house with your feet still dirty what would this mean about the reception of your message? How would shaking the dust off your feet help you to deal with rejection?

6:14-29

Q.6 What views did people have as to who Jesus was? What was Herod's view? What crime was on his conscience? How is it that hearing of Jesus brings about conviction of sin for us too? What situation had led to Herod arresting John? What does this story show us about John, his character and his ministry?

What having arrested John was Herod's dilemma? What clue does this give us as to the battle that is going on inside people even when they are persecuting us?

Q.7 What motivated Herodias to ask for John to be murdered? What motive led Herod to make a rash promise and then carry it out and so go against his conscience? Should we expect as Christians to be justly treated by our society.

6:30-44

Q.8 How had the apostles missed the point as to why their mission was so successful? How do we make the same mistake? In what way was a quiet retreat with Jesus going to help? How did Jesus react when His peaceful time away with His friends was interrupted? Was He annoyed and frustrated? Why not?

Q.9 What need did He recognise in the multitude? What action by Him did His compassion produce? How would this response help leaderless sheep? What on the other hand was the disciples' response to the same need? In what two opposite ways do we respond to need in others? When Jesus ordered the disciples 'You give them something to eat', did He really expect that they could? If not what did His question force them to do? He then pushed them a step further by His next question 'How many loaves do you have?' The outcome was twofold - first they recognised they could not do it and secondly they examined their slender resources and placed them at His disposal. How do impossible problems also force us to do the same?

Q.10 Why did Jesus have everyone seated in orderly groups ready to eat before the miracle had taken place? What do you suppose He said when He prayed to His father? How should we believe God before we can see how and when He will answer? Why do you think Jesus used the disciples to distribute the food? What was He teaching them for the future? What impact would the twelve baskets of leftovers have on them whenever they looked back on this time? How should this story affect the way we study the Bible?

6:45-52

Q.11 Jesus sent His disciples back home to Bethsaida without giving them time to savour the excitement of the miracle. Again He put them into a demanding situation where they would need to learn something about true dependence on Him. What did He teach them about where His own dependence on His Father began?

Q.12 As they struggled with an adverse situation He came to them walking on the sea. What was He showing them about Himself? Why did He intend to pass by? What did He hope they would do? Why were they afraid of Jesus? What three actions of His took away their fear? How does verse 52 explain the real cause of fear in our Christian lives? How do fear and forgetfulness go together?

6:53-56

Q.13 What was the contrast between the responsive disciples who saw Jesus walking on the sea and the crowds who saw Him walking on the land? How sadly is there often the same contrast between the hard hearted churchgoer and the open hearted unbeliever? People who recognised Him brought others to Him for help and prayed to Him for them. What was the result? What will happen if we pray for the needy around us and bring them into the presence of Jesus? If we do not what does this reveal about our hearts?