

DARKNESS AT NOON

Mark began his gospel with these words: "*The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*"

What is the good news according to Mark? Think about that question as we look at a quick summary of what happened to Jesus according to Mark.

One-third of his entire Gospel is about Jesus' last five days of life! One-sixth focuses on his last 24 hours alive! The cross dominates the entire book. Listen as I quickly summarize what Jesus experienced on his way to that cross.

- Ch. 2 Scribes believe Jesus is speaking blasphemy
The righteous people are offended because he eats with tax collectors
- Ch. 3 Pharisees and Herodians plot to kill Jesus
Scribes from Jerusalem call him demon possessed
Mary and brothers and sisters arrive to take him home, thinking he is crazy
- Ch. 6 His disciples, despite the many miracles, don't understand
- Ch. 8, 9, 10 Jesus predicts his passion three times.
After each time the disciples are clueless and worse
- Ch. 11, 12 Jesus clashes with the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees
- Ch. 14 Chief priests and scribes finally set their plan in motion to get rid of Jesus once and for all
Judas, one of the 12, joins them in the plot
All 11 disciples flee from the arrest scene, and other than Peter, never show up again in Mark.
One young man leaves all, even his clothes, to flee from Jesus (opposite of call of disciples)
Peter shows up as prophesied one last time to deny Jesus three times
Both the Jewish court and the Roman court condemn Jesus to death
Roman soldiers whip Jesus, mock him, and crucify
Regular people who pass by join in the mockery
Chief priest and scribes arrive and again mock
Both criminals mock Jesus as well!
When Jesus dies, he cries out only one "word" "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"

The entire Gospel of Mark relentlessly marches to this moment. Darkness at noon. This is as bad as it gets.

What kind of God would allow this to happen? What kind of a God would allow God to die for this crazy, selfish world? 15:31 is right! We want a God who will, and can, save himself.

Think of your own life! Don't you find you experience the absence of God more than the obvious presence of God? Don't you have more questions than answers?

Deaf sign for Jesus is to point to both palms!

For Mark, Good Friday does not make everything OK for Jesus or for us. Life is still full of problems, questions, and death!

Is there anything positive one can say about this story? Think again about Jesus' one word from the cross in Mark. **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** Jesus died, trusting in God's promise that he would be vindicated. Jesus died, believing that God would raise him.

The good news is that the angels didn't show up.

The good news is that Jesus didn't save himself.

The good news is that Jesus died for the sins of the world.

The good news is that the world is saved!

For Mark, the cross is both as bad as it gets and as good as it gets! When the centurion confesses that "this man **was** God's son," he was right. Jesus is a **WAS!** Jesus at this moment is not an **IS**. Jesus went to his grave believing that God's promise to vindicate him would be true. Jesus died crying out **MY** God.

For Mark, Easter will not take away all the pain of Good Friday. But Mark does say that God has been there. God is one of us. God chose to die, that we might have life. Life to be lived to the fullest, as Jesus lived it.

What does that mean? How did Jesus live his life "fully?" He lived it fully for others. He used all his power for others. Because he did, God didn't abandon Jesus to Hades forever, but raised him on the third day.

The young man at the tomb invites us to share the cup with Jesus again. He invites us to follow him to Galilee.

Close with a little anecdote. As many of you know, I like to climb mountains. Why is it that good mountain climbers rope themselves together? Answer: To keep the sane ones from going home.

Why is it that we gather regularly in worship of Jesus, who died for us? Because the whole idea of dying for others and living our whole lives for others doesn't make sense in our culture, any more than it did to those who mocked Jesus on his cross.

We gather in order to strengthen each other for service of the one who died for us.