



**“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45**

Jesus, the Suffering Servant (Part 2)

Mark’s gospel is written to help his readers answer two basic questions: Who is Jesus? and What does it mean to be his disciple? The first half of the gospel focused on the question of Jesus’ identity, but it left that question open-ended. The second half of the gospel will focus on the question of discipleship, which began in the first half and will intensify as the gospel continues. The two questions are interrelated. An understanding of discipleship requires a clear and correct understanding of Jesus. The more a person is able to understand the meaning of Jesus’ life, the more that person is able to understand what it means to follow him as a disciple.

Mark’s development of the meaning of discipleship and how best to follow Jesus can be explored on three levels when reading the gospel: first, what Jesus teaches those who follow him about discipleship; second, what Mark teaches his community three or four decades later about discipleship; and, third, what the gospel of Mark teaches us today about discipleship. The experience of following Jesus is not a once-only event for the original disciples. Everyone can come to understand who Jesus is by experiencing him through the inspired word of Mark’s gospel and so come to understand what it means to be his disciple. Our response to Jesus is part of the continuing story of the gospel.

Mark's interest in discipleship pervades the entire gospel, beginning with the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John from their fishing careers and ending with the final invitation to the disciples and Peter at the empty tomb. The term "disciples" is used over forty times in Mark's gospel, and "the Twelve" another ten times. For Mark, the disciples represent the church to which he addresses his gospel, the Christian community in Rome, and later believers in each generation. The Twelve represent church leaders, in Mark's community and in every age.

Discipleship that developed during the ministry of Jesus, discipleship in the early church of Rome, and discipleship throughout the centuries are joined together through the resurrection of Jesus. For the gospel of Mark, the resurrection is not so much the end of the gospel but, rather, the beginning. The life of Jesus is good news because he is risen. It is the reason that discipleship can be lived over and over again in the lives of each generation of Christians.

And so we join with disciples in every age to follow Jesus. As we enter the narrative of Mark's gospel, we learn from Jesus and his original disciples how to be a follower of the Risen Jesus today. Through the process of listening, reflecting, and praying, these texts of the gospel become our own and we find our place within the community of disciples.

Reflection and discussion

- What is the relationship between the two basic questions of Mark's gospel?

- How does Mark's gospel link the original disciples of Jesus with disciples in the church today?