

Spiritual Rhythms in Mark's Gospel

Ben Deaver at Tallgrass at The Well

Mark 4:1-20

So what? Jesus invites us to know Him through His Scriptures

Feel what? Hunger for relationships with Jesus

Now what? Engage with Jesus in the Scriptures

Favorite verse, if any?

Thanks to Emma Highfill and Edward Tuttle and the worship team!

Merger Status

- Love our team

- We've accomplished a lot over the last 10 months
- Lots of work ahead that will require all hands on deck
- Navigating Covid
- We are better together
- We are in it to grow deep and eventually wider

VISION CASTING

The purpose of Tallgrass at The Well is to create community together by inviting everyone into the Way of Jesus.

The Way of Jesus - Spiritual Rhythms in Mark's Gospel

INTRODUCTION/PROBLEM

Mark 4:1-12

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around

him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. **2** He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:

3 "Listen!

- . I wonder what the voice of Jesus sounded like. How inviting it must have been.

Let's pray.

Four Soils

1st Soil - A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

2nd Soil - **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was

shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

3rd Soil - **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.

4th Soil - **8** Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

9 Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

- Touch your ears. You have two ears. Clean them out. Hear Jesus!

10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. **11** He told them, "The

secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables **12** so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

- . Insider/Outsider language. Secrets. I don't like it.
- . Is Jesus trying to intentionally obscure His teaching? Is He trying to obfuscate His message to keep people out of the Kingdom who would love to be part of what He's doing? Doesn't Jesus want people to turn to Him and be forgiven?

Matthew 13:14-15 – Matthew goes into more depth.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah (chapter 6):

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears...

- They would later literally plug their ears at the Message of Jesus.

- **Acts 7:51-51** “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! **54** When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. **57** At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, **58** dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

...and they have closed their eyes.

- Can you imagine driving down the road and deciding to just close your eyes?

Matthew 13:14-15

Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

For this people's heart has become calloused...

Calloused Hearts - Not good when your heart is calloused. This happens over a series of mostly small decisions that add up to a big time issue.

- Callouses on my fingers from playing guitar
- Callouses on my hands from lifting weights

- . Calloused ears - Kid yelling in the background but I literally can't hear it because I've grown calloused to it
- . Callouses on my heart from repeatedly not listening to God

Ephesians 4:17-19

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them **due to the hardening of their hearts.** **19** **Having lost all sensitivity,** they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

Hosea 4:16

The Israelites are stubborn, like a stubborn heifer. How then can the Lord pasture them like lambs in a meadow?

- . Stubborn heifer vs. Leadable lamb
- . Don't be the heifer, be the lamb.

Hosea 4:17

Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone!

- . He's not even interested. Don't bother him.

Analogy: You know when you keep calling a friend to get together and they're never available? What do you do? Eventually you quit calling. Or maybe you've had that happen to you. But, as soon as they shoot you that message, you're ready to pick that friendship back up!

Amos 8:11-12 - Amos lived 12 miles south of Jerusalem near Bethlehem. He lived and prophesied almost 800 years before Jesus was born.

11 "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water...

- or of building materials
- or of toilet paper
- or of more time to get more done
- or of the ability to smell and taste...makes you long for when you can taste again...
- or you fill in the blank for what you think you're missing...

Night by Elie Wiesel - 1960 memoir based on his Holocaust experiences with his father in the Nazi German concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald in 1944-1945

"I saw, not far from me, an old man dragging himself on all fours. He had just detached himself from the struggling mob. He was holding one hand to his heart. At first I thought he had received a blow to his chest. Then I understood: he was hiding a piece of bread under his shirt. With lightning speed he pulled it out and put it to his mouth. His eyes lit up, a smile, like a grimace, illuminated his ashen face. A shadow had lain down beside him. And this shadow threw itself over him. Stunned by the blows, the old man was crying: 'Meir, my little Meir! Don't you recognize me...You're killing your father... I have bread...for you too... for you too...' He collapsed. But his fist was still clutching a small crust. The old man mumbled something, groaned, and died. Nobody cared. His son searched him, took the crust of bread, and began to devour it. He didn't get far. Two men

had been watching him. They jumped him. Others joined in. When they withdrew, there were two dead bodies next to me, the father and the son."

That's a gruesome picture of what can happen when famine strikes. We are so far from experiencing famine in our land...or are we?

- A famine of nutrition has led to crazy cancer and disease stats in our country... We're overfed yet undernourished.
- A famine of hope has led to staggering suicide rates in our society... Our social media feeds look beautiful but we're hurting inside.
- A famine of the latest gadgets and toys has led to Black Friday deaths...
 - In 2008, a Walmart employee on Long Island was trampled to death when more than 2,000

enthusiastic gift-grabbers busted through the store's front door and could not be contained. This marks Black Friday's first stampede fatality. What a social commentary these Black Friday deaths are about what our culture is seeking.

"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign Lord, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food...

but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

12 People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.

- Hunger gets people's attention.

- At least they eventually began searching for the word of the Lord...

Deuteronomy 8:3 (Matthew 4:4)

- Irreligious/Hedonist - We're more than mere animals needing to eat and drink, etc.

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

- We desperately need to experience hunger so that we can know that we need more than food, drink, sleep, and sex to live. We need the very words of God to truly live life as our Creator made us to live...in relationship with Him.

- . Hunger gets people's attention. That is one of the benefits of fasting, which Pastor Josh talked about a couple weeks ago.
- . Silence also gets people's attention... That is one of the benefits of silence and solitude, which Pastor Josh also talked about a few weeks ago.
- . Amos is specifically talking about a famine of hearing the words of God that is 400 years of silence, 400 years of famine of the Word of God, between the Old Testament and the New Testament...
- . 400 years of silence... God was holding His tongue, like a Father trying to get through to His kids, waiting to speak.
- . When are we silent enough to hear God speak? When are we quiet? And quietly listening...to hear our Father speak?
- . Give a minute of silence...

Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*
- Gospel Proclamation regarding Caesar Augustus from a providence of Asia Minor (reigned from 27 BC – 14 AD)
“Whereas the Providence which has guided our whole existence and which has shown such care and liberality, has brought our life to the peak of perfection in giving to us Augustus Caesar, whom Providence filled with virtue for the welfare of mankind, and who, being sent to us and to our descendants as a savior,

has put an end to war and has set all things in order; and whereas, having become visible... and whereas, finally that the birthday of the god, Caesar Augustus, *has been for the whole world **the beginning of the gospel concerning him***, therefore, let all

reckon a new era beginning from the date of his birth."

It's into this landscape that Jesus shows up and scatters much needed Seed - the Good News about Him!

Mark 4:13-20 – Rare explanation of a parable.

13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? **14** The farmer sows the word.

YouVersion Bible app on your phone

- Hold up your phone. You have access to so much on that device.
- YouVersion Bible app
 - 500 million installs as of last November, new install every 1.3 seconds

- Approximately 64 billion Bible chapters read or listened to in 2021
- 2600 versions of Bible text in 1760+ languages
- Is all of that Scripture engagement leading towards being with Jesus, being like Jesus, and doing what Jesus does?
- We have so much access to the Words of God...but are we hungry for them. Do we know that they are needed for us to experience life?
- Side note: The Bible is trustworthy. If you don't believe then I encourage you to do some digging into three things, which we don't have time for today.
 - First, the reliability of the Scriptures as trustworthy historical documents.
 - Second, the way God has verified His Scripture through fulfilled

prophecy. This point has deepened my trust in the Scripture as the Word of God more than anything else in the past ten years.

- Third, the events surrounding Jesus Christ, including His death and physical resurrection, as historical fact.

1st Soil - **15** Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

- Spiritual opposition

2nd Soil - **16** Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. **17** But since they have no root, they last only a short

time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

- . Shallowness
- . Hurry and distraction
- . Trouble and persecution - For much of the history of our country it has been pretty cool to be called a Christ-follower. That has been rapidly changing. Do you have roots to weather the trouble and persecution ahead?
- . We want roots that grow deep!

3rd Soil - **18** Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **19** but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

- . Love of money
- . Worldly-mindedness

- . This is one of the worst places to be, to be in relationship with Jesus but to love other things more than Him.

4th Soil - **20** Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

- . The emPHASis here is on the Soil, not the Sower or the Seed. The Sower and the Seed are good and are doing their job. The question is the preparedness, the softness, the readiness of the Soil to receive the Seed from the Sower.
- . **26** He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. **27** Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does

- not know how. **28** All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. **29** As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”
- **30** Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? **31** It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. **32** Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”
 - It takes patience to see the fruit of the fourth soil.

APPLICATION

Apprenticeship to Jesus:

- Be with Jesus – Relationship
 - **John 5:39-40** You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.
 - **Matthew 4:4** Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

- Be like Jesus – Character
 - **Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

- **Romans 12:2a** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

- Do what Jesus does – Ethics
 - **2 Timothy 3:16-17 16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Matthew 13:16

16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

OBJECTIONS:

1. I don't like to read.

2. I don't have time.
3. I'm in a hurry.
4. I'm easily distracted.
5. The Bible is boring.
6. The Bible is hard to understand. It was written to Middle Easterners a long time ago!

Psalm 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good...

CONCLUSION - Invite the band up.

**Next Step: This week's practice -
Scripture Study**

- . Beginning:
 - Start reading some Scripture sometime this week
 - Meditate on a phrase
- . Baseline:
 - Read a 21-day reading plan from bible.com

- Memorize a verse
- Stretch:
 - Read Scripture daily and incorporate into our other practices (silence, solitude, prayer, fasting, and more to come)
 - Write a passage out

INSPIRATION

Cleopas and his buddy on the road to Emmaus – Luke 24:25-32

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from

Jerusalem. **14** They were talking with each other about everything that had

happened. **15** As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked

along with them. **16** but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces

downcast **18** One of them named Cleopas asked him "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the

people **20** The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced

to death and they crucified him. **21** but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this

took place. **22** In addition some of our women amazed us. They went to the

tomb early this morning **23** but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels,

who said he was alive. **24** Then some of our companions went to the tomb and

found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. **28** As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. **29** But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. **30** When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. **31** Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. **32** They asked each

other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

PRAYER - Hunger for Scripture. Hunger for relationship with Jesus. Any who are experiencing famine in their lives right now. Who are starving for hope or comfort or relationship or purpose. I invite you to respond to the voice of Jesus as He says to you, "Listen... Come to me..."

Invitation

Chopping Block:

- . **Jeremiah 6:16** This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will

find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'"

- **Luke 24:44-45** **44** He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." **45** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.
- Kimyal community in West Papua - A reporter arrived with her film crew as the MAF plane landed carrying their Bibles, to the Kimyal community in West Papua. They'd waited 47 years to have the New Testament translated into their heart language. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ag2AzWgRKAk>
- *Book of Fire: William Tyndale, Thomas, More and the Bloody Birth of the English Bible* by Brian Moynahan

. **Mark 4:21-25, 33-34** **21** He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? **22** For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. **23** If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear." **24** "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. **25** Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." **33** With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. **34** He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with

his own disciples, he explained everything.

- Jesus offends the mind to reveal the heart.
- Who will stick around? John 6
- Spiritual rhythms; rhythms of grace
- Be kind to yourself. Rom 4
- Jesus was born into a specific time and place and people.
- Jesus was a carpenter who became a Rabbi.
- Timeline
 - Judge and Prophet Samuel (1056-1004 BC)
 - King Saul (1050-1010 BC)
 - King David (1010-970 BC)
 - The Prophet Amos (750 BC; during Jeroboam II's reign; first prophetic book written)
 - King Josiah (640-609 BC)
 - Walls completes in 444 BC (Neh 2)

- Sweet words – Ps 119:103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- Lamp for my feet – Ps 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
- The word of the Lord was rare in those days – 1 Sam 3:1 The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.
- **2 Kings 22:8-13** **8** Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord." He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. **9** Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: "Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the Lord and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the

temple.” **10** Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. **11** When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. **12** He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant: **13** “Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord’s anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

- Rare Breakthrough Points in History
 - Nehemiah 8:1-12 **1** all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel. **2** So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. **3** He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. **4** Ezra the teacher of the Law stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion.

Beside him on his right stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah and Maaseiah; and on his left were Pedaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam. **5** Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. **6** Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. **7** The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah— instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. **8** They read from the Book of

the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. **9** Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. **10** Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." **11** The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a holy day. Do not grieve." **12** Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to

celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

- The words of the book are that you were uniquely created but the world is deeply misaligned but God has brought alignment through His Son and He wants to be in a relationship with you and teach you to walk in His Way, the Way you were created to live.

That's true freedom!

- **1 Timothy 4:16** Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

- Teaching / Sound doctrine – that which brings health

- The Word of God speaking the Word of God

