

'On your Marks..'

A whistle-stop tour of Mark's account of the life and ministry of Jesus

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' He said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" [Mark 1.14f]

Mark was a man on a mission, and he was writing for people in a hurry. His is the shortest of the four gospel accounts, and a sense of great urgency runs through it all. He puts the spotlight on Jesus, and he wants his readers to see from the start both *that*, and *why*, Jesus is good news: and *how* He becomes good news for each of us.

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".. but they could not.."

Mark 9.2-29

There's a stark contrast in this passage between the fulfilling experience of 3 disciples on the mountain top, and the frustrating attempts of the disciples to drive out an 'impure spirit' from a young boy.

In some ways this narrative provides a graphic picture of the 'highs and lows' in our experience as followers of Jesus. At those 'mountain-top' moments when we catch a glimpse of the bright majesty of Jesus, all things seem possible: but when faced by the harsh realities of life in this world we're often aware of our weakness and failure.

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1. **Read Mark 9.2-29.** As always, start by reading through the whole passage to get the flow of Mark's narrative.

In what ways does the passage reflect the contrast between your Sunday worship and your Monday-Saturday service?

What experiences have you had which help you relate to the disciples in their inability to help this man and his son?

2. **Read Mark 9.2-13.** Three disciples are taken up 'a high mountain' by Jesus where they witness something of the majesty of Jesus.

Moses and Elijah are the great representative figures of the law and the prophets (the Old Testament): what's the significance of Jesus meeting and speaking with them?

Read 2 Pet.1.16-20: Mark almost certainly was dependent on Peter for the events he records: what did Peter see as the lesson of this experience?

What practical lessons do you take from this passage?

3. **Read Mark 9.14-19.** Something of a 'rammy' arose between Jesus' disciples, teachers of the law and a watching crowd, on account of the failure of the disciples to help a man in his need.

What do you think the 'arguing' was about? How have you experienced this sort of 'argument'?

In what ways is the boy's having been robbed of speech and hearing (see v.25) an illustration of our predicament as sinners?

What is Jesus' analysis of the disciples' failure here (v.19)?

4. Read Mark 9.20-29. Jesus addresses the need by challenging the man to believe (v.23) and His disciples to pray (v.29).

What does Jesus mean by saying that "*Everything is possible for one who believes*" (v.23)?

How should we be helped and encouraged by the man's response to Jesus (v.24)?

In what ways has this narrative challenged you?