

Lent 2012
Trusting God
Mark 8:31-38

Sermon

Hobart, February 26th, 2012

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Scripture Readings:

OLD TESTAMENT READING:

Proverbs 3:5-12

- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
- ⁶ Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.
- ⁷ Don't be impressed with your own wisdom.
Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.
- ⁸ Then you will have healing for your body
and strength for your bones.
- ⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth
and with the best part of everything you produce.
- ¹⁰ Then he will fill your barns with grain,
and your vats will overflow with good wine.
- ¹¹ My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline,
and don't be upset when he corrects you.
- ¹² For the LORD corrects those he loves,
just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.* ¹

* Greek version reads *And he punishes those he accepts as his children.* Compare Heb 12:6.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation.* "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Pr 3:5-13). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 8:31-38

³¹ Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man* must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. ³² As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.*

³³ Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. “Get away from me, Satan!” he said. “You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”

³⁴ Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”²

* “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

* Or *began to correct him*.

* Or *your self?* also in 8:37.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. "Text edition"--Spine. (2nd ed.) (Mk 8:31-38). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

INTRODUCTION:

I. WE ARE NOW IN THE SEASON OF LENT

A. 40 DAYS THAT LEAD UP TO EASTER

1. It is a time of preparation in which Christians down through the centuries have practiced various spiritual disciplines, most prominently, prayer and fasting
2. It is a time in which we can spend time thinking about our lives, and our need of all that Jesus made possible for us at his death and resurrection.

II. SIN

A. AND AS WE TALKED ABOUT LAST TIME, SIN IS AT THE HEART OF OUR PROBLEMS

1. We saw that sin is a lot more than breaking a list of rules
2. Much more seriously, sin is, at its heart and core, living apart from God
 - a) Being our own gods, ruling our own lives, deciding for ourselves what is right and best for us
 - b) Or submitting to other gods, or idols as our authority and priority
 - c) Letting other people, other philosophies, other pursuits and desires rule and direct our hearts, minds and lives

B. GOD ALWAYS LEADS AND GUIDES US IN THE WAYS THAT ARE BEST FOR US

1. But our human minds tend towards disbelief of that, to distrust that
 - a) We tend not to fully believe that everything God does and instructs is the absolute best in all cases

S.P.S:

A. THE OT IS FULL OF EXAMPLES OF INDIVIDUALS AND NATIONS WHO DOUBTED GOD

1. Who didn't trust him, that went elsewhere to get their needs and desires met

a) It started with Adam and Eve and continues on today

B. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES AMONG JESUS' OWN DISCIPLES

1. How even those who followed him, and lived with him day to day, failed to understand and trust what he did and said

2. We are going to see how this ties in with the season of Lent

3. And some ways we can grow in our appreciation, trust and faith in our God

C. PRAYER

BODY:

III. TRUSTING GOD

A. PROVERBS 3:5-7

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.

⁶ Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.

⁷ Don't be impressed with your own wisdom.
Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

B. YOU'D THINK THOSE WHO GOD WORKED WITH, LED AND BLESSED MOST WOULD BE THOSE WHO TRUSTED HIM THE MOST

1. But when we look down through the history of God's people we see an awfully long list of distrust and departure from God and his ways

a) Starting with Adam and Eve, Cain, Eli's sons, Saul, and so many of the kings of Israel

2. Even the disciples had some major times of doubt and disobedience

a) As one minister says in particular about Mark's gospel.

One of the themes that Mark keeps coming back to over and over again is the disciples' failure. He shows us that the disciples never quite seem to get it right. They fail to understand what Jesus says and time and time again. They just don't get the point of his parables, they misunderstand the message of His teaching, they are unable to grasp the meaning of His predictions. And because they misunderstand what Jesus says, they also fail to grasp who He is and what it means to follow Him. They consistently think of earthly kingdoms and political power. They fight among themselves for the best positions as they debate who is greatest in the kingdom.³

C. THEY DIDN'T REALLY KNOW OR TRUST JESUS

1. But that is something Jesus was working on with them, and then sent the Holy Spirit to continue to lead and empower them in



IV. GROUPS OF 3:

A. WRITE DOWN ALL THE EXAMPLES YOU CAN THINK OF

1. where one or more of the disciples failed to understand, doubted, contradicted or failed to act on what Jesus taught or instructed them



³ Unknown author, *The Disciples Failure - Mark*, a sermon, [hscoc.org/widgets/download.aspx?file...Docs%2FMark+\(16\).pdf](http://hscoc.org/widgets/download.aspx?file...Docs%2FMark+(16).pdf)

B. JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. **Matthew 11:3** Are you the Messiah we've been expecting, or should we be looking for someone else?

C. JOHN RECORDS A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS IN WHICH THOMAS HAD DEEP DOUBTS AND MISGIVINGS

D. MARK 4:14

1. Jesus rebukes them all for their lack of understanding of his parables

E. MARK 4:40

1. Their lack of faith after the storm on the Sea of Galilee

Mark 4:40 Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

F. MARK 8:14-21

1. The disciples failure to understand what happened with the feeding of the 5,000

G. MARK 9:19

1. Disciples wanting to sit at Jesus' right hand in the kingdom

H. MARK 9:19

1. Failure to Heal a young Boy
2. Jesus says to them;

¹⁹ Jesus said to them,* "You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

I. MARK 14, RECORDS ONE FAILURE OF THE DISCIPLES AFTER ANOTHER

1. **Mark 14:4** disciples got upset at the woman who poured perfume on the head of Jesus and Jesus had to rebuke them.
2. **Mark 14:10-11, 17-21, 43-45** Judas' betrayal
3. Then, in his time of greatest need, they all deserted Jesus.
4. **Mark 14:31** Peter claims he will never leave Jesus

* Or said to his disciples.

5. **Mark 14:37-38** Later in the chapter, while Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane, the disciples are sleeping when they should have been watching.

6. **Mark 14: 50** Disciples all forsake Jesus at Gethsemane

7. **Mark 14:66-72** Peter's Denial

J. LET'S JUST LOOK AT ONE OF THESE;

V. MARK 8:31-33 JESUS REBUKES PETER

1. In the preceding passage (**Mark 8:22-26**) there is the partial and then complete restoration of the sight of a blind man, which serves as a powerful metaphor for the disciples lack of understanding and faith
2. Then in **Mark 8:29** Peter boldly proclaims his belief that Jesus is the Messiah
3. After that, (**Mark 8:31**) comes the alarming proclamation of Jesus that he was going to suffer terribly, be rejected and die

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹ Then Jesus began to tell them that he, the Son of Man, would suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the leaders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, and three days later he would rise again.

B. PETER THEN REBUKES JESUS FOR SAYING THESE THINGS

³² As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and told him he shouldn't say things like that.

³³ Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and then said to Peter very sternly, "Get away from me, Satan!"

C. WHAT A REBUKE!

1. Peter is acting against God and his will, being like Satan in opposing him

MARK 8:33

³³ Jesus turned and looked at his disciples and then said to Peter very sternly, “Get away from me, Satan! You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”

2. Peter sees who Jesus is from a human point of view
 - a) He doesn’t really know God, his love and grace, and his unrelenting and unchangeable desire and will to save us all from our sins, by the ultimate act of love and self sacrifice
3. Peter is like the blind man was at first in the preceding passage, seeing things in a distorted way

³⁴ Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

D. THE GOOD NEWS OF COURSE IS THAT ALTHOUGH PETER WENT ON TO DENY JESUS THREE TIMES;

1. Jesus kept working with him, and through the Spirit transformed him into a faithful and effective disciple
 - a) He did take up his cross, he listened and learned, and shared in the work of God’s good news, at great sacrifice, including his own life, apparently being crucified upside down in Rome
2. Similarly, Jesus doesn’t give up on us no matter how often or seriously our faith falters or fails
 - a) Jesus is always with us to similarly transform our hearts and minds and faith

* Or *your self?* also in 8:37.

VI. WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THESE INCIDENTS?

A. FAITH IS THE OPPOSITE OF SIN

1. It is trusting God to lead us out of the wilderness of life lived on our own, our way
 - a) To resist the temptations of life relying on Jesus to work in and through us, leading the way, as he did in the wilderness
2. He is the beginning and the ongoing source of our new life of Faith
3. Rather than beginning his ministry in a garden, like in Genesis, or where he began the end of it; like Israel, and our lives as well, Jesus began his ministry in the wilderness.
 - a) He ended his ministry on earth in the ultimate wilderness of death
4. Jesus was God, descended into our world, to experience and live our lives and even our death, in the wilderness of our world.
 - a) In a sense he repeated Israel's experience and the experience of our lives apart from God.
5. But Jesus transforms, redeems and turns that wilderness experience upside down.
 - a) Instead of affirming or serving himself by acts contrary to God's instruction, Jesus affirms and strengthens himself through faithfully devoting himself to trusting God, and living in intimate, loving, devoted and obedient partnership with him.
6. Jesus refused the gamut of Satan's temptations
 - a) All of which were to get Jesus self-focused rather than trusting his Father
7. Let's pick it up at the final temptation in

Matthew 4:8

⁸ Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ “I will give it all to you,” he said, “if you will kneel down and worship me.”

¹⁰ “Get out of here, Satan,” Jesus told him. “For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him.’”

¹¹ Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.

The Ministry of Jesus Begins

¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.”*

¹⁷ From then on Jesus began to preach, “Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.”*

B. HEBREWS 11: ENCOURAGES US IN THIS WALK OF FAITH

1. It exhorts us to follow in the company of Jesus and those faithful servants before us
2. Who also put their trust in God rather than themselves and the world around them
3. It reminds us that faith is not in the things we can see around us, but in things not physically seen,
 - a) in God and his love, his life and family that he has invited us to participate in, and benefit from

C. ? WHAT SOLUTION DOES GOD GIVE US TO OUR INATE TENDENCY TO DOUBT HIM AND HIS INSTRUCTION AND PROMISES?

1. De-clutter our minds, and let God get through to us
2. Be quiet and listen
3. Humble, quietly surrender

* Deut 6:13.

* Isa 9:1-2 (Greek version).

* Or *has come*, or *is coming soon*.

4. Meekly put aside our own ideas, thoughts, biases and desires so the Holy Spirit can more clearly guide us and bring us into closer communion and unity with Christ who is our wisdom and freedom from sin.

5. As the saying goes, "Let go and let God"

D. THIS IS WHAT JESUS DID AND WHAT HE LEADS AND HELPS US TO DO

CONCLUSION:

E. SCHOLARS SAY THE BOOK OF MARK DELIBERATELY HIGHLIGHTS THE FAILURE AND LACK OF FAITH OF THE DISCIPLES

1. Susan R. Garrett writes;

Mark's depiction of the Twelve is negative but serves a positive purpose. By portraying them as blind and inconstant during Jesus' earthly ministry, Mark seeks to show that their positive—perhaps even heroic—stature and accomplishments already known to his readers were entirely post-resurrection developments. Only after Easter would the disciples be given full sight and brought to single-minded faith.

The portrayal of Jesus' disciples as abysmal failures before Christ's resurrection serves to magnify and commend the amazing grace and power of God. "I once was lost but now am found; was blind, but now I see."

Our God, Mark teaches, not only moves mountains but also opens blind eyes, softens hard hearts, and changes infidelity to unswerving devotion. "Might not such transforming power be available also to me?" the reader asks. "Might it not transform me, too, from one who is fearful, double-minded and in danger of deserting the Lord's way, to one who faithfully endures in time of trial?"⁴

F. GOD SENT JESUS TO BE THE LIGHT OF OUR LIVES

1. Jesus resisted the temptation to live away from God, to resist sin, and fully trust in God for us, on our behalf, as one of us, as all of us.

⁴ Susan R. Garrett, *Disciples on Trial*, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=35>

2. He repented and turned to God as the second Adam, for us, in our place
3. By relying on his faith and faithfulness, we are rescued from our inability to perfectly obey God.
 - a) But far from being left in disobedience in the wilderness of living apart from God, in and through Jesus, we are brought into that same intimate relationship with God.
 - b) We are enabled by the Spirit to share and engage in living the same faithful life Jesus lived and that most of the disciples ended up sharing in as well.
4. In Jesus we are led out of the wilderness, freed from the sins of the world, and empowered to live and share in the life of the Father, Son and Spirit.
 - a) Living and proclaiming the reign of God.
 - b) The new life that fully trusts and keeps in close communion with God, and one another.
5. God is not demanding letter of the law perfection
 - a) He knows us well enough to know we don't have perfect faith
 - b) That we will often fail in our loyalty and dedication to him
 - c) But through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, he keeps calling us back to be at one with him, to walk and talk and commune with him
 - d) To let him participate in our lives, so we can more fully participate in his

G. LENT IS A GOOD TIME TO THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS

1. To focus on our need of Jesus in our lives
2. To focus on some of the things we need his help in overcoming
 - a) Attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and actions that we put ahead of God, that we allow to distract and get in between us and our relationship with him
 - b) Things that we look to, instead of to God, in order to find meaning, comfort and direction

H. I'D LIKE TO CONCLUDE WITH A PRAYER FROM THE ANGLICAN BOOK OF PRAYER FOR THE BEGINNING OF LENT;

Litany of Penitence

The Celebrant and People together, all kneeling

Most holy and merciful Father:

We confess to you and to one another,
and to the whole communion of saints
in heaven and on earth,
that we have sinned by our own fault
in thought, word, and deed;
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

The Celebrant continues

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, Lord.

We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,

We confess to you, Lord.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,

We confess to you, Lord.

Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done:
for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our
indifference to injustice and cruelty,
Accept our repentance, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our
neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those
who differ from us,
Accept our repentance, Lord.

For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of
concern for those who come after us,
Accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;
Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
That we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

...Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who
desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn
from their wickedness and live, has given power and
commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to
his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of
their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly
repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel.

Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his
Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on
this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure
and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Amen.*⁵

⁵ Anglican Book of Prayer, *Preface of Lent-Ash Wednesday*, p.264-269